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## ABSTRACT

Despite the proliferation of indigenous higher education programs and institutions in Australia, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are concerned about continuing forms of imposition and domination. The central challenge is to understand that continuing forms of colonialism are responsible for the insidious and embedded features of hegemonic systems that still constrain the struggles of indigenous people through the manipulation of consent and dissent. Aborigines receive an education that is not congruent with their cultural values, but is designed to assimilate them into the wider society. The question of who should define and control "appropriate outcomes" is central to the growing demands for indigenous control of indigenous higher education. Alternative, independent higher education models in South Africa, Palestine, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States demonstrate that cultural survival, empowerment, and self-determination can be promoted when indigenous people exercise genuine control of their own affairs. Among the critical features that must be included in the emerging model of indigenous higher education are: control and direction by indigenous people; participation by indigenous communities; the role of elders as custodians of law and culture; attention to the question of "education for what?" in order to address the dilemma of continuing cultural assimilation and genocide; respect for the spiritual relationship between people and the earth; recognition of the traditions and aspirations of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders; and culturally appropriate ways of thinking, living, and working. (TD)

# Get it Right: Indigenous Demands for Control of Indigenous Higher Education

A paper presented at the Intercultural Conference - 'Cultural Diversity & Higher Education: Has it made a difference? Should it make a difference?'  
University of Technology Sydney, 27-29 September 1993

ED 403 087

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*Hegemony is characterized not only by what it includes but also by what it excludes: by what it renders marginal, deems inferior, and makes invisible. As a result, the effects of hegemonic education make it possible to define the real environment by what formal education marginalizes or excludes.*

Munir Fasheh<sup>2</sup>

*It is my belief that education must liberate students from the political and economic forces that subjugate our people, and from the low self-esteem and self-hate that oppression inculcates in many of its victims. Education should equip people to break down imposed barriers to self-fulfilment and self-realization. Self-realization can only be valid, however, if the needs of one's community are served by it.*

Es'kia Mphahlele<sup>3</sup>

*The problem of colonisation as eloquently spelled out by African, Indian, Latin American, Native American, Australian Aboriginal, Pacific and Maori activists is a problem of order and disorder which operates at the levels of external social structures and internal psychological processes. It has become a problem of the mind and of social consciousness which is still being disordered by the wider influences of former colonial masters, of*

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<sup>2</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), 'Community Education: To Reclaim and Transform What Has Been Made Invisible', in *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 60 No. 1, February 1990.

<sup>3</sup>Mphahlele E, (1990), 'Alternative Institutions of Education for Africans in South Africa: An Exploration of Rationale, Goals and Directions', in *Harvard Educational Review*, ibid.

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*metropolitan discourse and of the western academic tradition which continues to define what counts as an emancipatory project.*

Linda Tuhiwai Smith<sup>4</sup>

*Education must shift towards the area of allowing adults to think through the confusion, the tragedies, the mistakes, the pressures, to reflect on the very qualities that make them who they are; to identifying things they want their children to have; in other words to begin to take control of the entire educational process.*

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann<sup>5</sup>

## Introduction

There has been a rapid expansion of higher education provisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since the 1980's. This expansion has been largely predicated on the assumption that equity targets should be met through the provision of special support for indigenous students to participate in 'mainstream' higher education programs.

Despite the proliferation of indigenous higher education units, centres and institutions many indigenous people have expressed concern about continuing forms of imposition and domination. As the cultural crisis faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continues to place a heavy burden on the indigenous leadership in all aspects of life and work an urgent demand for reform in indigenous higher education that might address this crisis is being called for.

This paper examines the relationship between current higher education provisions for indigenous students and the issues of social justice, cultural survival, self-determination, personal and collective empowerment and community development. Using international comparisons, involving indigenous people in similar struggles elsewhere, it proposes a radical reassessment of current priorities and identifies the critical features of an empowering, community-driven alternative paradigm.

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<sup>4</sup>Smith LT, (1992), 'Editorial', in ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Educational Policy - Special Edition on Indigenous Education, Vol. 11 No. 2 1992, Department of Education, University of Auckland.

<sup>5</sup>Ungunmerr Baumann MR, (1990), in Bunbury R, Hastings W, Henry J and McTaggart R (eds), Blekbala Wei, Deme Nayin, Yolngu Rom and Ngini Nginingawula Ngawurranungurumagi: Aboriginal teachers speak out, Deakin Institute for Studies in Education, Geelong.

## Social Justice and Equity in Higher Education

Indigenous participation in Higher Education is a relatively recent phenomenon. As Bin-Sallik puts it "This denial of education to Aborigines is a legacy of the colonial past and subsequent policies and practices that did not abate until the beginning of the 1970's".<sup>6</sup> She points out that the forces responsible for the emergence of indigenous tertiary education included:

- Australia's perceived need to redress its failings in regard to Aboriginal people particularly in the light of its international political position in the early 1970s;
- The federal policy of self-management which required competent Aboriginal leadership;
- The increased demand for qualified Aboriginal people to take up positions in the growing Aboriginal private and public sector organisations;
- A growing demand by Aborigines for tertiary education;
- The availability of funds for tertiary institutions to introduce programs on an ad hoc basis.<sup>7</sup>

The important issue of under-representation and access to higher education for indigenous people has been the subject of considerable pressure for governments from reports of enquiries and recommendations from advisory and consultative groups.<sup>8</sup> Strategies that have emerged from these processes have largely been concerned with:

- special entry provisions;
- supportive study environments; and,

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<sup>6</sup>Bin-Sallik MA, (1989), *Aboriginal Tertiary Education In Australia: How Well Is It Serving The Needs Of Aborigines?* Aboriginal Studies Key Centre, South Australian College of Advanced Education, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Bin-Sallik, ibid.

<sup>8</sup>See for example, Jordan DF, (1984), *Support Systems For Aboriginal Students In Higher Education*, Report to Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission and National Aboriginal Education Committee; Miller M (Chairman), (1985), *Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs*, AGPS, Canberra; Blanchard CA (Chairman), (1985), *Aboriginal Education: Report of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education*, AGPS, Canberra; National Aboriginal Education Committee, (1986), *Policy Statement on Tertiary Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*, AGPS, Canberra; Hughes P, (Chairman), (1988), *Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force*, AGPS, Canberra; Johnston E, (1991), *Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody-National Report*, AGPS, Canberra.

culturally appropriate awards.<sup>9</sup>

From 72 enrolments in 1972 indigenous participation in higher education has increased dramatically as a direct result of the establishment and expansion of support programs and enclaves, or Aboriginal higher education units.

The important features of these arrangements have been:

- designing and administering specially targeted advertising and recruitment programs;
- conducting alternative selection procedures, and recommending on admissions;
- conducting pre-tertiary orientation or preparation programs;
- providing on-going academic tutorial assistance, and study skills programs to enrolled students;
- providing personal counselling, as needed; and,
- assisting students in a range of non-academic areas such as housing, child care and financial problems.<sup>10</sup>

According to DEET, in 1991 there were 4,800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education, which represented just under 1% of the total student population. Enrolments have significantly increased during the last decade at a rate 8 times faster than the total student population. From 1982 to 1991 Aboriginal enrolments increased by over 460% compared with 56% for all students. A third of these enrolments were in five institutions. Two of these were Batchelor College in the Northern Territory and the University of South Australia, which reported to have the highest numbers. In 1991, 62% of Aboriginal enrolments were women, compared with 53% of all higher education students. Two broad fields of study, arts and education, involve about a third of the enrolments. Aboriginal students, who tend to be mature age students, are more likely to enrol in a Diploma an Associate Diploma or a Non-award course of study.<sup>11</sup>

This growth in enrolments corresponds with the increasing concern on the part of the Commonwealth Government to raise the participation rates of indigenous people in higher education. This has been achieved primarily by implementation of the Aboriginal Participation Initiative (API) which has provided additional new

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<sup>9</sup>Bourke E, Farrow R, McConnochie K, Tucker A, (1991), *Career Development In Aboriginal Higher Education*, AGPS, Canberra, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>Bourke E, et al, *ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>DEET, (1992), *Higher Education Series: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students*, Update No.2 October 1992.

places for indigenous students since 1985. Provision of additional funding to higher education institutions is expected to result in further increases in indigenous enrolments. For example, in 1994 about 4,200 equivalent full-time places will be allocated for indigenous students compared with 1,900 places in 1989. In addition to this direct funding of places the 1991 Budget committed \$14 million over 4 years to increase the level of support services provided by institutions to indigenous students.<sup>12</sup>

The 1988 White Paper, **Higher Education: A Policy Statement**<sup>13</sup>, as well as determining a reform agenda for the higher education system included commitments to improved access and participation by Australians from all sectors of Australian society. This was to be achieved through the development of a long-term strategy that would place equity at the centre of higher education management, planning and review. The policy statement **A Fair Chance For All**<sup>14</sup>, which took two years to develop, provides the details of this national equity strategy. The policy provides a national framework within which institutions are required to develop their own equity plans for each of the six priority groups identified by the Commonwealth.<sup>15</sup> They are also required to consider the composition of their existing student body, comparing it with the mix of the general population particularly in the institution's catchment area, and consider the environment in which they operate and their particular strengths and priorities. Institutions must specifically:

- set short and long-term objectives for increased participation;
- set targets for achieving these objectives. The targets must as far as possible be quantitative, and be consistent with the national targets set out in a **A Fair Chance For All**, but may be set below or above these targets depending on the present rate of participation by a particular group;
- outline a range of strategies already in place or to be implemented over the triennium in order to achieve the desired outcomes; and
- indicate how progress towards objectives will be measured.<sup>16</sup>

The essential features of these arrangements for indigenous students relate to the incorporation of institutional Aboriginal education strategies into the educational

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<sup>12</sup>DEET, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>13</sup>DEET, (1988), **Higher Education: A Policy Statement**, AGPS, Canberra.

<sup>14</sup>DEET, (1990), **A Fair Chance For All: National and Institutional Planning for Equity in Higher Education. A Discussion Paper**, AGPS, Canberra.

<sup>15</sup>The six groups identified as being disadvantaged in respect of higher education are: people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; women in non-traditional fields of study and post-graduate study; people from non-English speaking backgrounds; people with disabilities; and people from rural and isolated areas.

<sup>16</sup>DEET, (1990), **A Fair Chance For All**, op cit.

profiles process, which sets out the institution's objectives, targets and strategies for implementation. Institutions are also required to develop on-going consultative mechanisms to involve indigenous community members in the planning, administration and resource allocation decisions relating to indigenous student participation. This includes an emphasis on setting out plans for the triennium expressed in terms of levels and fields of study in which indigenous students will participate.

### **Independence and Control**

The National Report of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody stated that "The challenge of self-determination and self-management requires an increase in the number of Aboriginal people enrolled in the full range of professional studies available in higher education institutions and an increase in the pool of Aboriginal graduates".<sup>17</sup> The Report provides details of a range of institutions and courses that have, in the Commissioner's opinion, developed "significant innovations in the provision of higher education services for Aboriginal people".<sup>18</sup> Commissioner Johnston is largely referring to "the establishment of more appropriate entry procedures, student support services and opportunities for genuine Aboriginal involvement in institutional decision-making by way of Aboriginal advisory boards".<sup>19</sup> He also makes reference to the strategies identified by DEET and NBEET which include:

- special entry arrangements;
- bridging courses linked specifically to entry to award courses;
- promoting off-campus study and alternate study modes;
- Aboriginal support units;
- supplementary study units concurrent with award courses; and,
- reviewing higher education curricula<sup>20</sup>

In his view "These strategies appear to me to be well directed and should be pursued".<sup>21</sup> However, in relation to indigenous adult education he raises some concerns that in our view are relevant to any proper consideration of current and future directions in indigenous higher education.

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<sup>17</sup>Johnston E, (1991), op cit. vol.4, p. 335.

<sup>18</sup>Johnston E, (1991), ibid, vol. 4, p.336.

<sup>19</sup>Johnston E, (1991), ibid, vol. 4, p.336.

<sup>20</sup>Johnston E, (1991), ibid, vol. 4, pp. 337-338.

<sup>21</sup>Johnston E, (1991), ibid, vol. 4, p. 338.

Referring to a submission from the South Australian Aboriginal Issues Unit the point is made that "There is a great need for Aboriginal people to obtain their own skills to maintain their community. What is happening now is they're dependent upon non-Aboriginal people who have those skills and this is not satisfactory to the community because when those people leave the community the skills are lost".<sup>22</sup> Commissioner Johnston recognises that "This is clearly unsatisfactory, and needs to be remedied by a concerted and comprehensive commitment to the development of appropriate education and training programs which are accessible, both geographically and culturally, to the greatest number of Aboriginal people possible".<sup>23</sup>

He then refers to research conducted by Foley and Flowers in New South Wales which revealed strong demand for adult education in five broad area's:

- adult basic education;
- community development;
- community organisation and small business administration;
- employment and enterprise development;
- trades and other technical skills.<sup>24</sup>

Their research indicates that despite the expansion of adult education programs during the 1980s, attempts to mainstream Aboriginal services and the deliberate restriction of enrolments in non-fee paying courses in State sponsored programs effectively reduced educational opportunities for indigenous adults. Furthermore, the usefulness of adult education provisions is directly related to the extent to which they accommodate indigenous needs and interests, particularly in relation to two crucial issues:

- clear, open and flexible consultation between the education provider and Aboriginal people; and
- the involvement of individuals from the Aboriginal community.<sup>25</sup>

The Report highlights the concern that "Aboriginal control of adult education is limited throughout Australia. Those institutions which do exist claim, at least in a number of cases, to be under-resourced and subject to bureaucratic control".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 342.

<sup>23</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 342.

<sup>24</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 342.

<sup>25</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 342.

<sup>26</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 342.

Institutions the report draws attention to include Tranby College, the Institute for Aboriginal Development and the Adelaide Aboriginal Community College.

Despite its success as an Aboriginal-controlled adult education institution "providing courses which respond directly to the expressed needs of Aboriginal communities"<sup>27</sup> Tranby has experienced significant difficulties and conflict with TAFE over the control of its courses:

"Tranby has an all Aboriginal Board of Studies who aim to determine the educational direction of the College and carry out regular community consultations. Because it is independent the College has been able to follow its own directions in developing methods of adult education which will best suit different Aboriginal groups. Courses at Tranby have come from what Aboriginal people have wanted, and it has pioneered courses that have later been taken up by other institutions....(However), Tranby does not receive direct funding from...DEET...Instead the bulk of DEET funding for Tranby goes indirectly to the College through the TAFE system. This means that TAFE controls the funding and is able to influence the way the College plans and manages its courses...this has been a constant source of friction between Tranby and TAFE."<sup>28</sup>

The Institute for Aboriginal Development has had similar problems to deal with, particularly in respect of course accreditation. In their submission to the Royal Commission they argued:

"We have...now been placed in the position of obtaining accreditation for our course through mainstream providers like TAFE. This is in direct opposition to the whole existence of the independent providers who offer courses in response to the need of the community they serve. If courses have to be accredited formally this accreditation should be done by an Aboriginal accreditation board".<sup>29</sup>

The Adelaide Aboriginal Community College is also reported as being subject to the same pressures. Commissioner Johnston states that he finds these constraints unacceptable and expresses strong support for the valuable work of independent Aboriginal adult education:

"I find it inappropriate that Aboriginal controlled adult education institutions are not funded merely because TAFE institutions are delivering similar courses. The Commission has observed that it is frequently the case that the attendance of Aboriginal people is much higher in the former institutions, which can set out to present their courses with a greater regard

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<sup>27</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, pp. 342-343.

<sup>28</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 343

<sup>29</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 344

for Aboriginal sensibilities and needs, and in a way that Aboriginal students find attractive."<sup>30</sup>

The Report raises the critical issue of 'appropriate' outcomes and who should define and control them, particularly in relation to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NAEP)<sup>31</sup>. The concern put forward by Dr HC Coombs, that the policy is "assimilationist and potentially destructive of Aboriginal culture"<sup>32</sup>, is specifically mentioned. According to Coombs "Aborigines receive an education designed consciously and unconsciously (but unsuccessfully) to assimilate them into the wider society; an education which is not congruent with their own cultural values".<sup>33</sup>

This point is amplified by the Institute for Aboriginal Development in their submission to the Royal Commission:

"Independent Aboriginal controlled education institutions arose because of the fact that mainstream educational institutions were not meeting the educational and training needs of the Aboriginal community, and to a large degree aren't responding to this need. There will be a loss of control and decision making as a result of the implementation of the NAEP, and the main threat to the independent providers is not just the question of funds and how much, but more the survival of Aboriginal culture".<sup>34</sup>

After some deliberation Commissioner Johnston came down in support of the NAEP, particularly insofar as the first main goal of ensuring Aboriginal involvement in decision-making is implemented and rigorously adhered to. We remain sceptical of the ability of governments, their bureaucracies and institutions to appreciate and appropriately support this fundamental priority.<sup>35</sup>

These concerns raised in relation to indigenous adult education, particularly in regard to the issues of 'appropriate' outcomes and who should define and control

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<sup>30</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 344

<sup>31</sup>DEET, (1989), *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy: Joint Policy Statement*, Canberra. The four main goals of the policy are: to ensure Aboriginal involvement in decision-making; to provide equity of access for Aboriginal people to educational services; to raise the rates of Aboriginal participation in education to those for all Australians; and, to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal people.

<sup>32</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *op cit*, vol. 4, p. 346.

<sup>33</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 347.

<sup>34</sup>Johnston E, (1991), *ibid*, vol. 4, p. 347.

<sup>35</sup>In a recent paper we have analysed the bureaucratic impediments that continue to undermine and work against Indigenous empowerment, self-determination and self-management: see Stewart I, Williams S & Carter J, (1993), *Bureaucratic Impediments to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Empowerment, Self-Determination & Self-Management*, paper presented at the 1993 National Social Policy Conference: 'Theory and Practice in Australian Social Policy: Rethinking the Fundamentals', University of New South Wales.

them are of direct relevance to the growing demands for indigenous control of indigenous higher education.

### Reproducing the Present or Choosing the Future?

In a paper presented at the 1988 National Conference on Adult Aboriginal Learning Ralph Folds and Djuwalpi Marika analyse the problem of dual development in Aboriginal communities and the role adult education and training could play in solving it. As they express it:

"Dual development in the Aboriginal context refers to development which community people are not part of. There is development on one side and Aboriginal community people on the other. The development is a small business, including many community enterprises, that run on community money from lots of Aboriginal customers, often with hard working people from outside the community making sure they are running efficiently. It is the community housing corporations that may employ a few Aboriginal people but are not under community control. The developed side also includes modern schools with hard working, well meaning teachers but without a community feeling of ownership... Of course community people take from Western society what they need, cars, video, telephone, but the development structure is not under their control".<sup>36</sup>

They draw attention to a range of problems and issues generated by dual development:

- it is tremendously dispiriting for Aboriginal communities;
- it symbolises the power relationships within Australian society;
- it creates feelings of impotence because of the inability to control change;
- Aboriginal people on the undeveloped side become second class citizens in their own communities;
- in many communities there are no choices to be made because no real control exists - people can only watch the future unfold;
- it feeds a generation gap between parents and their children - older people have strong links to communities but declining authority, their children are

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<sup>36</sup>Folds R & Marika D, 'Aboriginal Education and Training at the Crossroads - Reproducing the Present or Choosing the Future?', in Harvey B & McGinty S, (eds), (1988), *Learning My Way: Papers from the National Conference on Adult Aboriginal Learning*, Institute of Applied Aboriginal Studies, W.A.C.A.E.

attracted to the developed side and the material benefits it provides but are rarely able to share in those benefits;

there is a flow of young people away from rural and remote areas to the urban areas and cities where opportunities are severely limited;

the movement away from communities is a symptom of breakdown and disintegration of the sense of oneness and unity.<sup>37</sup>

Many self-management training programs which have tried to address these problems and issues have led nowhere at all. As Folds and Marika suggest " Those who deliver this training always seem disappointed and surprised when their well intentioned programs fail to capture the enthusiasm of Aborigines, and when, even after the appearance of success, some of their graduates do not perform as expected".<sup>38</sup>

The explanations frequently given by those on the developed side about this inability to wholeheartedly embrace the values, practices and life style represented by modernisation portray traditional culture as standing in the way of progress. Many of the features of this type of argument are offensive. For instance traditional life styles are devalued with people being described as 'primitive' or 'backward'.

Folds and Marika, however, argue strongly against this, stating that,

" Aboriginal people generally understand very well what is required of them and what development is all about but unlike those on the developed side they also understand the costs and have good reasons to hold back. It is people on the developed side who do not understand those reasons which have absolutely nothing to do with purposeful learning, but a lot to do with the power relationships in remote communities, the ownership and control of development and the way it is put in place".<sup>39</sup>

The experience of the Punmu community in Western Australia is cited as an example of how a community can work through these dilemmas and retain ownership and control of development. The key elements in their approach related to ensuring that development did not undermine their traditional leadership and that they took only what they needed from white culture and society and excluded what they did not want. Community needs were put above institutional needs. Institutions that were accepted were reshaped and made their own - "they made them Aboriginal". The school, for example, was radically

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<sup>37</sup>Folds R & Marika D, (1988), *ibid*.

<sup>38</sup>Folds R & Marika D, (1988), *ibid*. p 137.

<sup>39</sup>Folds R & Marika D, (1988), *ibid*. p 137.

changed and incorporated into daily life with the community filtering and defining school knowledge. In other words development has not been left to experts and outside views of what they should do " they are controlling it, they are not being developed, they are not the object of development but they are the initiators of it, they are doing it themselves, it is not something happening to them".<sup>40</sup>

In terms of development paradigms for indigenous communities, Punmu provides two critical principles:

"Aboriginal people are capable of working in a purposeful way in building their own future. There is no problem with purposeful learning at Punmu, everything they do is for the community and to make the community strong.

Aboriginal communities will embrace development when they have a sense of control over it, when they own it. Unless Aboriginal people bring development to their side rather than having to move across to the developed side few will participate in it. Aboriginal people need to make the developed side their own side."<sup>41</sup>

Using these principles they assert that adult education and training must contribute to advancement of community control:

"Without this, choices are only individual ones, a means to personal advancement rather than part of a process of community development and they will offer no advantages for community people. To achieve anything beyond transient success all training must become integral to an Aboriginal vision of community control. What is needed is for each community to construct its own framework of self-management, into which its educational and training programs can be built....This means that education and training must look further than taking over jobs in community institutions and enterprises; it must help communities take control of those institutions and enterprises and turn them into tools for community development."<sup>42</sup>

Education and training can therefore either reproduce the present structure or contribute to and facilitate Aboriginal ownership of development and provide choices for the future.

Where education and training is concerned with reproducing the present structure it fails for the following reasons:

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<sup>40</sup>Folds R & Marika D, (1988), *ibid*. p 138.

<sup>41</sup>Folds R & Marika D, (1988), *ibid*. p 138.

<sup>42</sup>Folds R & Marika D, (1988), *ibid*. p 138.

- Aboriginal people will never be comfortable working within power structures in which they feel no ownership;
- people from outside the community will always be needed to prop the system up and keep it going;
- it has created elites which have torn communities apart, particularly where a few local people have joined the developed side alienating themselves from the rest and with little or no community support;
- it assumes that there are the same jobs in every community and training is simply a matter of providing skills for those jobs;
- education and training is a one way process where the developed side speaks and teaches and the community side listens and learns;
- the community has to prove that it is just as good as the developed side so the emphasis is on attaining the same educational standards and outcomes as non-indigenous people under the principle of equality;
- it embodies the ideology of dual development, which is essentially a top down approach with knowledge flowing from those who have all the knowledge to those who are passive recipients of it and are victims of development;
- it aims to move indigenous people into mainstream jobs replacing white faces with black faces;
- indigenous people are captured within the present framework which they resist.<sup>43</sup>

The alternative approach is concerned with indigenous empowerment and the rebuilding and development of community controlled processes, enterprises and institutions, rather than the production of black people who can think and act like whites. The important characteristics of this approach involves :

- responding to community educational needs within a community development framework where indigenous people have executive control;
- not starting with assumptions about what communities want;
- not simply educating and training for jobs outside of a particular community context;

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<sup>43</sup>Folds R & Marika D, (1988), ibid. p 138-139.

- not treating indigenous people as empty vessels to be filled by experts;
- a two way education not a top down one, which treats indigenous people as equal partners;
- a common research effort and building a community development framework which starts in communities with community aspirations, not institutional or individual ones;
- cycles of work experience and study intensives;
- students discovering what their communities want and how those needs can be met;
- students working from their own experience, focusing on obstacles to community aspirations;
- defining problems and seeking solutions that can be built at the local level;
- exchanging ideas with indigenous people from other communities, representatives and policy makers of government departments and community development and educational experts who are used as consultants in a cooperative exchange of knowledge;
- students learning skills in critical thinking which they can apply to analyse the current circumstances of their community and its particular development needs;
- helping communities establish developmental frameworks which will encompass further education and training;
- building up from the bottom to make the developed side the community side with the community running its own affairs and establishing an economic base for the future.<sup>44</sup>

While their emphasis is on the role of adult education and training in solving the problem of dual development in indigenous community contexts Folds' and Marika's analysis has important implications for the debate concerning future directions for indigenous higher education.

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<sup>44</sup>Folds R & Marika D, (1988), *ibid.* p 139-140.

If those responsible for indigenous higher education are to contribute to a greater purpose than merely providing evidence to Commonwealth statisticians that equity targets are being met then they necessarily must take seriously and respond to the issues and concerns raised by Folds and Marika. This challenge, however, is far from straightforward as there are considerable constraints which operate to maintain hegemony throughout education systems and their bureaucracies.

As Linda Smith has recently explained, the current focus on indigenous societies, 'their' cultures and the problems associated with 'their' development provides legitimisation for the indigenous project which has concerned indigenous educationalists for some time and "gives space for the development of international discourses which have traditionally marginalised indigenous approaches to our own struggles".<sup>45</sup> However, this has to be viewed against a background of the continuing colonial legacy of marginalisation, under-development and various forms of oppression. This includes "the obsession of mainstream academic discourses (with) 'Others' and which in the view of many indigenous groups (has) consistently ignored them".<sup>46</sup> Part of this dilemma includes the substitution of the languages used by indigenous groups to make sense of the world with the language of the colonisers "through which indigenous people must now ensure that they are heard, seen and understood".<sup>47</sup>

In her analysis indigenous rights are concerned with reclaiming the agenda on "colonisation as 'unfinished business'".<sup>48</sup> This is contrasted with what she sees as "the further legitimisation of dominant views currently being represented in post-colonial discourses".<sup>49</sup> This is a crucial point. Colonialism doesn't just finish because previous masters have said it is finished even if they have withdrawn their presence and patronage. The problem is actually one of "order and disorder which operates at the levels of external social structure and internal psychological processes. It has become a problem of the mind and of social consciousness which is still being disordered by the wider influences of former colonial masters, of metropolitan discourses and of the western academic tradition which continues to define what counts as an emancipatory project"<sup>50</sup> (our emphasis).

The central challenge then for all who are concerned with indigenous rights is to understand that continuing forms of colonialism are very effective in finding ways of asserting hegemonic control through the manipulation of consent and dissent. Smith makes reference to a particularly insidious way of managing and defusing

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<sup>45</sup>Smith LT, (1992), op cit.

<sup>46</sup>Smith LT, (1992), ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Smith LT, (1992), ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Smith LT, (1992), ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Smith LT, (1992), ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Smith LT, (1992), ibid.

dissent involving indigenous academics who are working to define the discourses of critique and liberation. "The new field of post-colonialism", she says, "has been seen in this light by indigenous people whose struggles for emancipation are still just getting off the ground. Suddenly the discourse has changed and many of our non-indigenous colleagues have moved on to this post-colonial 'thing'".<sup>51</sup> As Bobbi Sykes puts it however " Post-colonial ...? What! Did I miss something? Have they gone?".<sup>52</sup>

Smith and others like her are struggling to reclaim the indigenous rights agenda through efforts to " 'name their own world' and define the nature of their relationships to others. These definitions are shifting ones as groups counter the dominant frameworks which have been used to classify and control indigenous knowledge, language and culture".<sup>53</sup> This has created a problem for some 'outsiders' to keep up with 'insider' definitions. However, it has provided a theoretical space in which indigenous discourses can develop. "Some may argue", she points out, "that the failure of outsiders 'to keep up' is representative of a wider failure of structural theory to transform the social realities for indigenous populations and other oppressed groups. However many indigenous interests would counter this view as yet another attempt by academics to shift the ground and thus maintain control of what counts as the cutting edge of theory and practice".<sup>54</sup>

Despite the reservations and concerns outlined by Smith, the transforming potential of critical theory and indigenous critical theorists developing emancipatory discourses is starting to take hold.

### The International Context of Reform in Indigenous Higher Education

Es'kia Mphahlele for instance, a Black South African educator, has described "a vision of how alternative education in South Africa can draw from 'the souls of the people' and pave the way for a transformative and humane educational system for all people in the country".<sup>55</sup> According to Mphahlele, an alternative education is alternative to "that which is provided, planned and controlled by a political authority whether on a local, or a national level... (it) is well structured, and has a seriousness of purpose, of its ability to contribute to the progress of the nation. It is alternative because it happens outside the conventional school, college, or university curricula, pedagogy, and examinations, and not because of its lack of structure or subject matter".<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Smith LT, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>52</sup>Bobbi Sykes quoted in Smith LT, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>53</sup>Smith LT, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>54</sup>Smith LT, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>55</sup>Mphahlele E, (1990), *op cit*.

<sup>56</sup>Mphahlele E, (1990), *ibid*.

The White dominated society of South Africa employs rules which frequently negate the highest human values and have required that Blacks adapt to and assimilate its cultural values. "A richer and more stimulating curriculum is needed", argues Mphahlele, "which would help students deal with their own environment, know themselves more deeply, and comprehend the problems of race, colour, and ethnicity in a painfully fragmented country. The curriculum thus needs to be radically changed in content and focus, which in turn calls for a different pedagogy...Such programs enrich participants and give a deeper meaning to knowledge, and at the same time help students select the grain from the chaff".<sup>57</sup>

Education is the product of a culture which it expresses and helps to define and redefine. The cultural purpose of education therefore is necessarily concerned with philosophical foundations. Mphahlele exhorts Black people to see themselves as Africans in more than a geographical sense "Our commitment to the African landscape goes deeper, because we have a spiritual bond to it, having suffered for it. In time, the Whites will have to outgrow their sense of superiority, and merge with the African soil--with the humanism of Africa--if they want to earn the designation 'African' ".<sup>58</sup> A similar point could be made about the need for White Australians to outgrow their sense of superiority and appreciate and accept the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's spiritual bond to the land.

A "New Education" is required which will cut across the dividing lines that have fragmented and alienated communities from one another and from their roots. Mphehlele emphasises that "Somehow, we should develop a common cultural purpose in our alternative structures. We should not shirk the responsibility, however arduous, of interpreting history, environmental studies, and civics for our students so that they comprehend and appreciate the beginnings of our respective cultures; where we all are at present; what kind of culture we want to shape ... no longer should the oppressed be bullied into adapting to another culture, simply because it yields overwhelming economic and political power".<sup>59</sup>

He makes the following points concerning the main features of this alternative education;

- . teachers, students and communities should no longer be exploited for ideological conversion that serves sectional interests;
- . the new teacher and the new student should be seen as part of the process of becoming;
- . teachers must be acknowledged as members of the community not outside of and against it;

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<sup>57</sup>Mphahlele E, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>58</sup>Mphahlele E, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>59</sup>Mphahlele E, (1990), *ibid*.

students need to be counselled to re-evaluate their politics and place them in perspective;

education opens options and enables people to sort out short term and long term political solutions;

Black pride, self-reliance and consciousness find articulation in community projects and educational programs;

entirely academic approaches should be discouraged;

educational programs and materials need to be related to the concrete realities of participants lives, as they are at present, have been in the past, and should or shouldn't be in the future;

such an approach departs radically from conventional state run education in its core curriculum and principles;

integrated studies develop thinking that is able to discern the totality of experience and constitutes the heart of alternative education, keeping teacher and student constantly in touch with their physical and human environments;

working from what students know about their own environments the approach explores the socio-historical context, making explicit political and economic issues that have a bearing on it, as well as the cause-and-effect relationships that shape it;

we have to travel the road of ideas, information, and communication in order to experience the awakening of our consciousness, the deepening of our awareness and an expansion of horizons;

indigenous higher education has to move away from the British 'ivory tower' model and develop extension services and outreach programs for the benefit of local communities and which can become centres of cultural activity;

education must liberate students from the economic and political forces that subjugate them and from the low self-esteem and self-hate that oppression engenders in many of its victims;

education should equip people to break down imposed barriers to self-fulfilment and self-realization, which can really only be valid if the needs of the community are served by it;

the individual should no longer be the sole focus of teaching but must also be trained to think and act as a servant of the community in order to appreciate the social evils that confront us and empower us to deal with them ;

the development of a moral sense and purpose gives us the power to realise that the self has continuity in time, enabling us to appreciate that the self extends beyond itself and is not restricted to one's own self;

education when it includes self-knowledge and a comprehensive awareness of one's environment promotes the moral strength to confront conditions, making options visible that were previously imperceptible or unthinkable;

it is futile to tinker with subjects within the curriculum and framework of a debased system without infusing the entire structure with new insights, perspectives, philosophies, and approaches;

to facilitate such an education process institutions and their programs need to be decentralized;

a national indigenous institution or academy should institutionalise these ideas so that they can be translated into collective action and involve communities through discussing and debating issues, working out cultural and social theory, publishing the views of its experts and developing appropriate research projects. Mphahlele says of this "it can become a think tank to which we can take our educational, economic, political, and other cultural problems for the academy to seek answers".

such an institution or academy would mobilise intellectual forces and enable them to speak with authority and in support of emancipation.<sup>60</sup>

The situation in South Africa is somewhat different to that in Australia. However, from an indigenous community perspective there are many striking similarities, based on the shared history and experience of dispossession, genocide, marginalisation, oppression, disadvantage and other continuing forms of imposition and domination. The development of community-driven education models is therefore a response to oppressive, hegemonic situations in which indigenous people seek to reclaim self-determination through empowerment and autonomous action.

According to Munir Fasheh, the qualities of internal strength, feeling at home in an environment and the ability to adapt to diverse conditions have helped indigenous people to survive for thousands of years. These qualities are required for survival and growth. He adds that human beings and their communities also require the qualities of empowerment, creativity and increased capacity for learning and that

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<sup>60</sup>Mphahlele E, (1990), *ibid.*

the role of education in promoting or hindering these qualities is crucial. In assessing the outcomes for graduates of the formal education system within the Palestinian community he observes that " their survival depends on external support, and their values are based on artificial, induced, or symbolic qualities".<sup>61</sup>

He specifically argues that such graduates:

- live on a special mixture of courses and curricula that are "scientifically and rationally" planned and prepared for them by experts, mainly from abroad;
- are in general alienated from their own environment and are mostly blind or insensitive to its basic problems and needs;
- become confused when the surrounding conditions change or when real world situations must be dealt with;
- find the "correct" answers and ready solutions they learned in the schools and universities suddenly become useless and meaningless.<sup>62</sup>

Fasheh shows how ideological environments serve to mark the boundaries of permissible discourse by discouraging the clarification of social alternatives, which makes it difficult for the dispossessed and disadvantaged to locate the source of their uneasiness, let alone do anything about it. Such environments serve the function of positioning people in the world, shaping the range of possible meanings surrounding an issue and actively constructing reality. They are shaped by existing power relationships and reflect the ideas, perspectives, interests, and behaviour of dominant groups and nations through local elites and urban centres.

In contrast to this the real environment "represents what formal education under these conditions normally marginalizes or excludes. It extends from the immediacies of the historical process as experienced by people, to the social institutions (material, spiritual, and intellectual), productive activities, and cultural traditions that shape people's responses".<sup>63</sup>

Traditional knowledge, although not intrinsically disempowering, is continually discredited by cultural hegemony and the positivistic world view associated with the modernisation paradigm. The relationship between hegemony and knowledge is very close. "Hegemony", as Fasheh argues "does not simply provide knowledge; rather, it substitutes one kind of knowledge for another in the context of a power relationship. Power, in this sense, is almost defined by what is excluded".<sup>64</sup> By

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<sup>61</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), op cit.

<sup>62</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), ibid.

extension "education and knowledge are not only about facts but also about the inner logic of society, both within itself and in relation to outside forces".<sup>65</sup>

For Fasheh the most crucial issue is the relationship is between education and the world it inhabits, and in particular the relationship of the learner to his or her community and environment

"the education I received prepared me to live in a world created by that education and hegemony. It left me blind to its ideological dimension, to the relationship between the knowledge transmitted to me and power. This blindness, which I believe is characteristic of hegemonically educated Third World people, left me unfit to live in the real world and its environment, unaware of its needs and resources...I was constantly sheltered from events in the real environment, and I looked for support and a sense of worth from outside. My strength did not emanate from internal qualities but from external sources".<sup>66</sup>

Hegemony, then, is characterised by what it includes and what it excludes. It is a powerful form of domination which permeates almost all spheres of activity and which often involves those being dominated in facilitating their own domination. It is always linked to an ideology which reflects the priorities and interests of the ruling elite and their culture and embodies values, conceptions, relations, language and interests which are translated into daily rituals and practices. It is crucial that those who are subjugated within a hegemonic relationship accept the ideology, lifestyle and values of the hegemonic group and see it as superior and universal, transcending class, gender, cultural, and national boundaries. Ideology in the sense used by Fasheh refers to "a world view that embodies a particular language and certain conceptions, values, relations, and interests that are translated into daily practices and that produce a certain consciousness".<sup>67</sup>

Fasheh sees the roles of intellectuals and institutions as being of primary importance because the reproduction of a hegemonic ideology is achieved through them. In a colonial hegemonic context intellectual development serves the purpose of providing "ideology without a basis in power", allowing intellectuals to "participate vicariously in the moral, intellectual, humanitarian, and technical aspects of Western culture, as well as in educational, scholarly, and research activities".<sup>68</sup> This is of critical importance to our analysis of the relationship between indigenous people and higher education in Australia. As Fasheh sees it "the training of colonial intellectuals directs them to derive their sense of worth

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<sup>65</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>66</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>67</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>68</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

and status from this vicarious participation, alienating them from their own culture, history and people".<sup>69</sup>

Hegemonic education in colonial contexts therefore tends to produce intellectuals who have lost their power base in their own culture and society and who also lack a power base in the hegemonic society. Fasheh, who has worked with Palestinian intellectuals for over twelve years observes that "because they lack a power base at both ends, these intellectuals tend to sharply overvalue symbolic power and tokens - such as titles, degrees, access to prestigious institutions, and awards - associated with the dominant culture".<sup>70</sup>

The power of Western hegemony is based on claims of superiority, universality, and ethical neutrality which extend into social, cultural, moral, political and intellectual spheres. However, in Fasheh's view, these claims are detrimental to creating a healthier and more humane world and should be subject to rigorous critical analysis, particularly in colonial contexts.

Education can therefore introduce hegemony into a community or it can "reclaim and develop what has been made invisible by hegemony".<sup>71</sup>

Consequently, community driven education

"requires us to use our senses again, to make things visible, and to allow people to speak. Like many other peoples in the Third World, Palestinians have been denied the value of our experience and have been robbed of our voice and sense of self-worth. Value, language, and visibility are at stake here because they have been taken away from a people's fundamental activities...meaningful education, or community education, thus reclaims people's lives, their sense of self-worth, and their ways of thinking from the hegemonic structures, and facilitates their ability to articulate what they do and think about in order to provide a foundation for autonomous action".<sup>72</sup>

The Palestinian community in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been involved in a dramatic transformation "New experiences are being lived, new realities created, new needs felt, new problems and challenges faced, new convictions formed, and new mental maps of reality and how to change it are being drawn in people's minds".<sup>73</sup> In this context an education is required "that will not impose obsolete, ready, fixed, or irrelevant mental maps of reality on people, but that will help people clarify and develop maps that reflect, as accurately as possible, the world

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<sup>69</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>70</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>71</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>72</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>73</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

around them and that can help them transform their conditions".<sup>74</sup> The purpose of such an education is to produce knowledge in the context of action. This turns around the hegemonic education processes which mould students to fit preconceived notions of education creating an education that fits the learners and equips them to support and contribute to cultural survival and community transformation. Fasheh sees this as one of the most serious challenges facing Palestinians today.

In response to this challenge, the Tamer Institute for Community Education has been created to consider education issues raised by the current conditions as well as plan for and develop arrangements for the future. This involves a radically different way of thinking about formal, non-formal and informal education processes. The central principles of education for cultural survival and community transformation require that:

- prepackaged education should not be allowed to determine the range of wants or demands that people accept. Formal education, which usually stresses rote learning and the acquisition of technical knowledge and skills, ignores the importance of feelings of self-worth, empowerment and self-acceptance and thus creates broken souls;
- education should be informed by the real needs in the community which need to be identified and prioritized;
- existing and future human, technical, and institutional resources necessary to meet those needs are identified;
- available resources are matched with real needs "in the hope that the 'fertilization' process will yield good 'fruit'. Any community that ignores this dimension as a main component of its development will eventually build a relationship of dependency on others";
- education is conceived of as praxis, and considers the context, personal experience, and the production of something material, social, spiritual, or cultural as primary factors in the educational process;
- the central goals are the empowerment of people and the changing of structures, both socially and mentally;
- the strategy is to work with existing groups and to use existing resources to meet basic needs and solve fundamental problems;

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<sup>74</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid.*

a teacher is seen as providing nourishment for the body, soul and mind, helping in the survival of the community and helping 'fertilize' what the community needs with what it has;

feelings of self-worth should not be false, superficial, symbolic, or a gift from others but should emanate from the inner self, from internal strength and from healthy psychological, intellectual and spiritual growth. "They should be connected to concrete things and, were ever possible, to production that enhances life";

an education that is geared toward empowerment and the wholesome growth of learners is an act of love, whereas education that aims only at transmitting technical knowledge and skills is basically an expression of laziness;

the building of human resources, which is not the same thing as labour force or credentialled people. "Human resources are people who can perform necessary functions in the community in a competent, creative way and who have not lost the ability to learn. These are people who do not think merely in terms of technical or budgetary issues, but have freed their imaginations from ready and packaged solutions and have required the habit of periodically restructuring their lives, both mentally and socially";

such an education constantly moves between life and the mental reconstruction of it. It is therefore not a fixed or final product but one which contains an element of potentiality and incites people to action as well as thought, breaking in from beneath existing structures in order to revitalise and restructure them. This praxis is the crucial core of community education. Meaningful learning will not take place if the process is devoid of context and practice;

learners are not given a number measuring his or her relative performance on an irrelevant test. "This principle applies to learning any skill or competency. It is a mystery and a pity that this obvious principle more often than not stops at the gates of institutions of formal learning";

diversity in educational settings, practices, structures and objectives. "Experiences, needs, and interests, differ so much from one learner to another that trying to use the same curriculum for all learners is both impossible and undesirable. It is like claiming that one suit should fit all people; those people who do not fit the suit are labelled unfit or failures. Diversity is at the core of life and of learning";

networking, communication and the exchange of ideas and experiences among groups involved in various activities. This is because activities in any community are closely related, coordination and mutual help avoid

duplication and waste and because the oppressive reality that characterises most societies represents a huge task that individuals cannot tackle in isolation.<sup>75</sup>

However, as Fasheh clearly understands "an education that responds to real needs, empowers people, builds networks, raises questions about assumptions and consequences, keeps oscillating between life and structures, and facilitates the transformation of mental and social structures is usually not compatible either with existing economic, political, and social orders or with the dominant values and mental patterns. Real manifestations of this kind of education are usually (and almost everywhere) fought harshly and promptly".<sup>76</sup> More often than not :

- . governments spend their money on formal, institutionalised, centralised education and forbid the formation of even small discussion groups outside that formal system ;
- . logics, other than Aristotle's, are not part of the regular curriculum ;
- . learners are not encouraged to tell their own stories;
- . people's voices and experiences are rendered inaudible and invisible;
- . words like hegemony, praxis, compassion, commitment, self-worth, and empowerment are usually absent from, or marginal in, educational discussions, courses, and schools of teacher training and education.<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless, the purpose of education must include the possibility of transforming oppressive and evil social reality rather than ignore, conceal or distort it. Community education expresses and embodies this hope "The idea of transforming reality is linked to hope, and hope is linked to belief that change is possible and that we are all responsible for it".<sup>78</sup>

Indigenous higher education reform in Aotearoa (New Zealand) is also concerned with the development of more critical understandings of the relationship between the control of power in maintaining societal positions of dominance and subordination and the reproductive role of mainstream education institutions and programs in maintaining these positions.

Graham Hingangaroa Smith, in a recent paper, describes the struggle that is taking place to assert the social, political, historical, intellectual and cultural legitimacy of Maori people through Kaupapa Maori, the philosophy and practice of 'being

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<sup>75</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>76</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>77</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

<sup>78</sup>Fasheh M, (1990), *ibid*.

Maori'. This has become the identifiable feature of a number of successful initiatives that have been developed from within Maori communities in order to intervene in Maori language, cultural, educational, social, and economic crises. Successful resistance strategies are now being studied in order to determine potential intervention factors that might have wider application in adult and higher education contexts. "Such radical action", he says, "is necessary in order to intervene in the general educational crisis faced by Maori (people) many of whom are trapped within a narrow range of existing mainstream...options".<sup>79</sup>

The paper emphasises the fact that Maori educational needs and aspirations are not homogeneous or singular and that previous and current educational policy reforms have "tended to apply 'blanket' policies based on this assumption, and subsequently (they have) been mostly ineffective".<sup>80</sup> Related to this educational crisis are the disproportionate inequalities suffered by Maori people and the associated problems that are reflected in societal indices such as health, unemployment, criminal activity, welfarism and socio-economic factors. Smith emphasises that

"even an uncritical view of the purported instrumental relationship between schooling, credentialism and work, ought to acknowledge that rising Maori unemployment and a burgeoning Maori underclass are indications of the chronic failure on the part of 'would be' educational reformers".<sup>81</sup>

He then argues that the development of more critical understandings and engagement with reform processes is raising fundamental questions that explode the myth of the neutrality of knowledge and expose the fact that knowledge is selected in order to benefit particular dominant interest groups. Examples of such questions include :

- policy reform for whom?; policy reform in whose interests?; what counts as legitimate policy reform?
- what counts as knowledge?; how is such knowledge produced?; how is this knowledge taught?; whose interests does this knowledge serve?<sup>82</sup>

Smith draws attention to the lengths to which Maori people are prepared to go to defend their cultural aspirations under the Kaupapa Maori theory of change which "speaks to the validity and legitimacy of being and acting Maori; to be Maori is taken for granted. Maori language, culture, knowledge and values are accepted in

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<sup>79</sup>Smith GH, (1992), "Tane-Nui-A-Rangi's Legacy....Propping Up the Sky" (Kaupapa Maori as Resistance and Intervention), paper presented at the 1992 New Zealand Association for Research in Education/Australian Association for Research in Education Joint Conference, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia.

<sup>80</sup>Smith GH, (1992), ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Smith GH, (1992), ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Smith GH, (1992), ibid.

their own right".<sup>83</sup> The crucial change elements contained within the Kaupapa Maori theory of change include:

Tino Rangatiratanga (relative autonomy principle)

The goal of relative autonomy involves control over ones own life and cultural well being. Such relative autonomy in context of education has important implications in regard to administration and management, curriculum and pedagogy. Put simply, where Maori people are able to exercise choice based on relative autonomy there is a deep commitment to making things work.

Taonga tuku iho (cultural aspirations principle)

Through Kaupapa Maori cultural aspirations, particularly in relation to the struggle for language and cultural survival, are more assured. This provides a strong emotional and spiritual factor to support the commitment of Maori to the change processes. It gives recognition to the deeply held emotional drive that Maori people have in relation to the revitalisation and survival of their culture. As Smith says "This 'energy' and 'force' is harnessed in ways which commit Maori students more wholeheartedly to the enterprise of learning and education".

Ako Maori (culturally preferred pedagogy)

Teaching and learning settings and practices that are closely and effectively connected with the cultural backgrounds and life circumstances of Maori communities are preferred. This reflects the different values and attitudes towards knowledge in the Maori world view. Knowledge is mainly perceived as belonging to the group. In this context individuals are only repositories of knowledge in so far as this benefits and contributes to the whole group. Knowledge is therefore shared and individuals have a responsibility to use knowledge to benefit others. The overt display of knowledge is discouraged and regarded as showing off (whakahihī). There are many other expressions of culturally preferred pedagogy which represent a direct contradiction to those often emphasised and incorporated in mainstream (Pakeha) institutions.

Kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga (mediation of socio-economic factors)

Kaupapa Maori is a powerful and all embracing force, particularly through its emotional and spiritual elements. It commits Maori communities to take seriously the challenge of improving education despite social, economic and other impediments. The impact is ideological and assists in the mediation of

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<sup>83</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid*.

unequal power relations. Although it does not eliminate the socio-economic crisis it does provide a cultural framework which reduces the debilitating effects which socio-economic factors have on Maori participation in education. The collective structure of the extended family (whanau) is a key intervention factor in Kaupapa Maori. "Group responsibility embedded in collective cultural practice", says Smith, "often operates to mediate (socio-economic factors).

#### Whanau (extended family management principle)

This principle supports the previous one by providing a practical support structure to alleviate and mediate social and economic difficulties, parenting difficulties, health difficulties and others, which are not located in individual homes but in the total whanau. It is the whanau that takes collective responsibility to assist and intervene. This is a reciprocal relationship, however, which requires individual members to support the whanau. In this extended family structure of relationships parents have a responsibility, for example, to support and assist the education of all children in the whanau. Through this process negative attitudes are being transformed into positive ones.

#### Kaupapa (collective vision principle)

Kaupapa Maori is based on a collective vision which provides guidelines for excellence in Maori and what a good education should entail. This includes an acknowledgment that Pakeha (non-Maori) culture and skills are also important if Maori are to participate effectively and fully at every level in modern New Zealand society. Its power lies in its ability to articulate and connect with Maori political, social, cultural and economic aspirations.<sup>84</sup>

Smith then provides a case study of the Kaupapa Maori intervention strategy operating at the tertiary level in the development of Maori education in the Education Department at the University of Auckland. As background to the case study he provides a number of telling points:

- There are very few Maori students in universities and even fewer who graduate ;
- Maori students are usually older 'adult entrants into University';
- Very few Maori students go on to do post-graduate study, although proportionately more do than non-Maori.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>85</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid*.

At Auckland University, the Education Department has been implementing the Kaupapa Maori intervention strategy since 1988 in order to do something positive about the lack of Maori students, particularly in post-graduate programs, at the University. The main features of this intervention are based on three assumptions:

- . that institutional frameworks are essentially culturally antagonistic to Maori students;
- . that institutional structures should not be taken for granted; and,
- . that space needs to be created for Kaupapa Maori within restrictive institutional structures - this needs to be done by focussing on the mode of intervention as a positive, proactive strategy rather than it being negative and reactive.<sup>86</sup>

Historically, despite some institutional changes and concessions, Maori students have been expected to change to conform to the "prescribed 'mould' of the institution".<sup>87</sup> Since the 1980's, however, there has been a new emphasis on engaging the institutions in order to create authentic space for Maori structures within these settings. This directly confronted two taken for granted principles of policy making for Maori: "that policy needed to conform to the 'giveness' of institutional settings and that policy should be developed by experts and handed down to the people".<sup>88</sup> The new intervention strategies assume "a level of critical consciousness to enable ongoing 'reflective and reflexive'...critical monitoring".<sup>89</sup>

Smith highlights several important considerations which underpin this strategy:

- . Maori are often forced to conform to taken for granted structures within institutional settings. The justification for this is usually expressed in terms of Maori students having chosen to enter the institution and therefore should abide by its canons, practices and expectations;
- . This is problematic insofar as "most Maori people do not come into the institution...if they do, it is often wrongly assumed that Maori have exercised a freedom of choice and, therefore ought to accept the 'taken for granted' status quo situation. The reality is... that the 'choices' most Maori have are limited, to either participating in Pakeha dominant institutional frameworks, or not participating at all";
- . Many departments within universities construct answers to questions such as who determines what counts as knowledge, what counts as research,

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<sup>86</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>87</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>88</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>89</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid*.

what counts as pedagogy, and what counts as a credential, in culturally exclusive ways;

Notions such as academic freedom only apply in selected and predetermined knowledge and cultural frameworks;

The issue of who has power is fundamental. "In New Zealand universities it is mostly Pakeha (non-Maori) who determine the answers to these questions";

Because of lack of available alternatives Maori have little option other than to enter Pakeha dominant tertiary institutions "and do their best to survive in largely culturally alienating environment";

Maori people what excellence in both cultural frameworks, it is not an either or option;

The Kaupapa Maori intervention strategy is inclusive and can involve a whole department and its personnel if they are willing to support Maori staff. "In the Auckland case, many Pakeha staff are key components of this intervention. In this sense, there is a role for everyone to assist in the task of intervening in Maori educational crisis, even it might only be to move aside and allow others to proceed with the tasks which need to be carried out".<sup>90</sup>

Using the framework of the key intervention elements and principles of Kaupapa Maori the case study provides a number of examples of transformational practice:

Tino Rangatiratanga (the relative autonomy principle)

Appointment of staff with status and influence at the senior level in order to control important decision making in both the academic and cultural domains.

Development of understanding of both embedded and visible power relations operation for and against Maori interests.

Provision of critical, theory based courses which are relevant to Maori experience and its political context.

Provision of meaningful choices for Maori students so they feel that they have real power to choose and not be restricted to what is offered.

"Most importantly, it is the power (academic freedom) to assert the validity and legitimacy of Maori knowledge without interference".

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<sup>90</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid.*

Taonga Tuku Iho (the cultural aspirations principle)

Provision of a range of courses that connect culturally with Maori students their cultural backgrounds and home situations.

Connection with the emotional and deeply felt desire in relation to Maori language and cultural survival and revitalization.

Use of Maori language as a teaching medium.

Positive reinforcement of the validity of Maori knowledge, language and culture.

Ako Maori (Maori teaching and learning principle)

Reduction of the distance between teacher and learner.

Reinforcement of Maori notions and attitudes about knowledge and learning. For example, "knowledge is not the property of individuals, it belongs to all and individuals are only repositories of knowledge for the benefit of the whole group...everyone has useful knowledge and a contribution to make to the benefit of the total group...elder learner have a cultural responsibility towards the younger learners...(and)...faster learners have a responsibility to help slow learners. Knowledge should be shared".

In contrast to this the important tenets of university education include the endorsement of individual endeavour, meritocracy, competition and the commodification of knowledge.

Maori preferred teaching and learning principles include the use of socially and culturally comfortable and significant settings such as the marae.

Kia Piki Ake I Nga Raruraru O Te Kainga (mediation of socio-economic impediments)

Maori students have been severely affected by the impact of user pays education.

Monetary support for Maori students is sought pro-actively through Maori and Pakeha grants and scholarships.

Support networks have been established and are subject to ongoing, frequent monitoring. These networks extend to survival outside of the university.

The demands of academic life and domestic survival frequently conflict. This requires preparedness to constantly advocate on behalf of students who are seeking funding support.

#### Whanau (extended family principle)

This involves setting up close, integrated networks amongst staff and students and implies responsibility to each other. The emphasis is on shared responsibility "if one person fails in the class, the whole class has failed (in the cultural sense)".

The sharing of ideas, reading, research, and notes is seen as important and is encouraged.

Recognition of students' genealogy (whakapapa) and tribal (iwi) background provides a supportive environment for students.

Peer group support, as an expression of the whanau network, assists in the mediation of socio-economic impediments.

#### Kaupapa (collective vision)

A collective vision is developed around the minority status, lack of power and marginal positioning of students.

A deep desire to retain Maori language and culture and intervene in the wider Maori social and economic crisis is shared by Maori students.

Emphasis is placed on Maori post graduate development. The ultimate aim of this is to move Maori people who are involved in education from middle management roles to more influential positions of authority where they can become involved in significant decision making.

A great deal of effort is involved in developing critically conscious students.

As Smith puts it "These visions are shared in both formal and informal gatherings of Maori staff and students, and are packaged into positive, pro-active, dynamic actions".<sup>91</sup>

The importance of the Kaupapa Maori intervention strategy lies in its potential to create authentic cultural spaces within dominant Pakeha institutional settings. For Smith this is more than the simplistic and tokenistic 'culturalist' intervention strategies instigated by the traditional liberal reformers, such as increasing the number of Maori staff, providing Maori dimensions in existing courses, and

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<sup>91</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid.*

modifying pedagogical approaches as in making visits to the marae or community. Kaupapa Maori is concerned with structural reform and moving beyond the surface level in order to engage with "deeper impediments associated with control of knowledge, validity of knowledge and culturally preferred pedagogy".<sup>92</sup>

This supports the important aim of reducing the fundamental structural impediments involved in the unequal power relationship between Maori and Pakeha and the associated socio-economic disadvantages.

The strategy does not attempt to overthrow existing structures either immediately or completely. What it does do is challenge and critically engage what is taken for granted by the Pakeha academic establishment and its dominant institutions.

Harvey Mintzberg has said that the most interesting organizations "live at the edges, far from the logic of conventional organizations, where...the richest, most varied, and most interesting forms of life can be found. These organizations invent novel approaches that solve festering problems and so provide all of us with new ways to deal with our world of organizations".<sup>93</sup>

Schuyler Houser uses this theme to describe and examine the efforts of tribal communities in North America to develop and implement indigenous management processes in tribal colleges. Houser, emphasises that North American tribal communities had very effective ways of getting work done well before Europeans arrived on the continent. These ways of organizing labour persist in contemporary community life, although this may not be readily apparent to non-indigenous outsiders. Preparation for the sun dance ceremony, for example, takes months of work and careful planning and organization. This work, as Houser explains, "is customarily accomplished without the aid of a single prepared budget, written statement of objectives, formalised public relations strategy, or recorded minutes of a steering committee".<sup>94</sup> To the non-indigenous outsider, whose frames of reference have been shaped by the dominant society, this can appear disorganized or chaotic. However, for the indigenous participants, "the event may have been more or less well organized, and the same patterns and management techniques will probably be repeated, in more or less the same ways, the following year".<sup>95</sup>

Despite the efforts of governments and their instrumentalities to destroy and then assimilate indigenous North American people many tribal cultures have survived. "Prolonged exposure to non-Indian values and institutions clearly altered the behaviours, attitudes and expectations of many tribal people, and new skills and

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<sup>92</sup>Smith GH, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>93</sup>Quoted in Houser S, (1991), 'Building Institutions Across Cultural Boundaries: Indian Colleges use traditional management skills to plan for the future', in *Tribal College, Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, Volume 2, Winter 1991, Number 3.

<sup>94</sup>Houser S, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>95</sup>Houser S, (1991), *ibid*.

abilities were added to the cultural mix, but the fundamental uniqueness of tribal societies persisted".<sup>96</sup> The survival of families has been critical in the maintenance of values and the transmission of the rules of tribal society in relation to "accomplishment, authority, rewards, distribution of surplus, cooperation and competition, leadership, and the giving and taking of directions".<sup>97</sup> This has meant that in contemporary reservation society non-indigenous organizational forms are operating in co-existence with, or have been pervaded by, traditional values and practices. Although on the surface many of these institutional and organizational forms appear to be little different from non-indigenous structures and processes the similarities can be deceptive.

One of the difficulties here is the reluctance on the part of many non-indigenous people to recognise and value the legitimacy of the cultural differences. This is frequently accompanied by the assumption that where differences do exist a replacement, or displacement, is occurring based on the 'superiority' of the dominant society and its development paradigm. This has had some very negative consequences, including the internalization of such negative beliefs about the inferiority of tribal cultures on the part of many tribal members themselves.

Another problem that tribal communities have been facing is the 'antiquarian bias' much of the non-indigenous writing and scholarship that refers to Indian culture and styles of management "what is old, distant and exotic is valued above what is modern, lively, and accessible".<sup>98</sup> In particular, the root cause of material poverty tends to be linked with poor management, which is a variant of the 'blame the victim' syndrome. As Houser says "Tribal communities are then seen as being deficient in managerial skills, which must be taught by or supplied through outsiders. If material prosperity is viewed as the inevitable result only from poor management, then tribal communities may be seen as having much to learn and little to teach".<sup>99</sup>

In this context tribal colleges have been faced with some extremely complex issues, especially in relation to economic and community development. Each college has had to find ways of dealing with and resolving the tensions inherent in the relationship between tradition and modernity. The different management styles that characterise the tribal colleges have largely remained within oral and behavioural traditions and have rarely been written about or discussed outside of the tribal communities. Local expectations and traditional patterns form the cultural ground rules which each tribal college has had to identify. These ground rules have then been built into each institutions methods of management and are used to define the relationships with 'others' such as non-indigenous academics, evaluation and accreditation teams and students and visitors from outside of the

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96 Houser S, (1991),ibid.

97 Houser S, (1991),ibid.

98 Houser S, (1991),ibid.

99 Houser S, (1991),ibid.

community. Where management tools are taken from the dominant society they are fitted to the goals of the institutions not the other way around.

The creation of new styles of education and the building of new institutions has not been achieved without some difficulty. In fact each college has had to overcome some resistance even within their home communities because of the historically negative relationships indigenous people have had with educational institutions. This resistance has taken the form of scepticism, struggle and division and conflict "the divisions have sometimes appeared as political opposition to an individual college, sometimes as competition for buildings or money, and sometimes as indifference or passive hostility".<sup>100</sup> However, the tribal colleges have been largely successful in working through these issues, because they have created patterns or styles of organization that are relatively low cost and effective as local institutions and which support each other across different tribal cultures.

According to Houser the tribal colleges have the following characteristics, which in his opinion can be readily transferred to and replicated in other community contexts:

The colleges see themselves as being concerned with the values of their particular tribal community, which provides a frame of reference for considerations about institutional mission or educational purpose. As Houser puts it "local tribal values, as each community defines them, are essential to the existence of the institutions, and to the education of their students".

The process of defining values has been one of gradual accumulation based on discussion, inquiry and experience.

The importance of older members of the community and the significance of oral and traditional methods of transmitting ideas, values and ways of life is central to this process. The recovery of traditional values, says Houser "and their incorporation within a college, seems to become part of a continuing process of self-definition by the institution and the community". This has the effect of situating the colleges within the continuity of tribal life.

The traditional values of the communities provide a powerful orientation for the future, both for the colleges themselves and for their students. This orientation conserves and extends the heritage of the tribal communities.

The core-values of the colleges are used to provide contexts for decision-making, rather than for the generation of "hard-and-fast rules". "Board members, administrators and faculty evaluate new policies or actions by asking, 'Is this consistent with who we are, with what we are about?' This

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<sup>100</sup>Houser S, (1991),ibid.

evaluation is a process which, for any particular issue, may take months or years".

No one traditional or contemporary value provides the key for success, in organizational or educational terms. "What is important is the emphasis placed on the having of values (particularly spiritual values) and the awareness and discussion of them as a normal part of college life".

Because of the emphasis on tribal values the colleges take nothing in higher education for granted. Everything is examined in relation to local heritage and culture. In this way each institution shapes the character of its staff and student body and attracts people who "share some portion of the college's stated values". In the same way, those who stay for any length of time either adapt to the perspectives of the institution or they leave. It is worth noting also that most of the colleges have informal networks of staff who have left for various reasons and who continue to share and support the values and aspirations of the institutions.

Academic achievement and personal success are not the primary focus in the colleges. 'Understanding' and 'wisdom', and the potential for service to one's own community, are the predominant motivating values and aspirations. However, this conceals a "benign paradox". Houser says that "it is becoming increasingly clear from academic records of tribal college students, and from professional records of faculty, that these emphases on stated values are quite consistent with significant personal, academic, and intellectual achievement".

Tribal colleges are concerned with maintaining a balance between resistance and openness to change. This means looking in two directions at the same time "towards the current and historical body of tribal traditions, and towards the techniques and results of the contemporary mainstream educational communities".

Each institution recognizes several kinds of knowledge and several legitimate sources of expertise. The cultural and linguistic knowledge of traditionally-trained experts, which would rarely be acknowledged in non-indigenous institutions, is given an important role, status and value in the tribal colleges. The colleges have in fact been reasonably successful in "bringing traditionally-trained experts in tribal culture, and conventionally-trained academics, into productive working relationships with each other".

Non-Indian staff and students express appreciation for the warmth and acceptance they encounter, often reporting that their own cultural and social attitudes have shifted dramatically as a result of the experience.

The inclusive climate of tribal colleges does not stifle healthy internal conflict, but promotes vigorous debate of potentially controversial views. Consequently, the colleges tend to avoid the "unfocused pleasantness" and "entrenched bitternesses" of non-Indian colleges and universities.

The central work of the colleges, as educational institutions, involves personal, community and organizational change. This includes the adaptation and absorption of ideas, skills and technologies from other cultures.

The success of organizational innovation is largely determined by who does the innovating and at what speed. In this regard, local indigenous control over the pace and direction of change is of crucial importance. Houser emphasises that "The colleges have insured local control both through their individual charters, granted by tribal governments, and, since 1978, by provisions of their federal authorizing legislation, the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act. The importance of this principle is reinforced by the colleges' national organization; the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (the national association of tribal colleges) state that each college have its own tribal sanction or charter, and further, that the governing board of each college must have a majority of Indian members".

External imperatives for change are frequently met with sceptical resistance by the tribal colleges and their communities.

Funding difficulties and tight budgets have also forced the colleges to concentrate on gradual change, cautious planning and the essential principles defined by the institutional mission statements.

The tribal colleges have deliberately remained small scale institutions. This has ensured that extensive individual contact occurs between students, staff, administrators and community members. This has the advantage of being like an extended family, "providing structure, support, encouragement and discipline, in addition to instruction...The familial nature of tribal college life may, in fact, be an essential ingredient for organisations to function in cultures where families are still the basic units of economic, spiritual, and emotional identity".

The organizational structures of the colleges are relatively flat with few hierarchical distinctions and a narrow salary range. Authoritarian or charismatic leaders are not encouraged. Decision-making is based on participatory and collaborative processes.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Houser S, (1991),*ibid.*

Some of the older tribal colleges have been operating for twenty five years. They have evolved into mature organizations and have conspicuously incorporated the local tribal values into their institutional plans and daily operations. The combination of cultural knowledge and intellectual reflection provides exciting possibilities for "new ways of relating spiritual, intellectual, and organizational values unlike any now existing".<sup>102</sup> This is of enormous significance for indigenous people who have been failed by conventional educational institutions. Houser considers that the tribal colleges are successfully addressing two needs that have been created by that failure "the need for restoration and healing of traditional bases for personal and social life, and the need to build on those bases for vital and humane communities".<sup>103</sup>

### Asking the Hard Questions

As we noted earlier the increasing participation rates of indigenous people in Australian higher education institutions is a major priority for the Commonwealth Government. The national objectives for indigenous participation in higher education, as defined by the 1990 discussion paper *A Fair Chance For All*, are:

- to increase participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in higher education with the emphasis on bachelor and higher degrees and certain disciplines including law, business and administration, medicine and health studies; and
- to increase the completion rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education.

The associated national targets are expressed in terms of:

- an increase of 50 per cent in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in higher education by 1995;
- an increase in the proportion of bachelor degree enrolments to 60 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments by 1995 (as opposed to the high percentage in higher education diploma and non-award courses);
- improvement in the graduation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to that of the total student population by 1995; and

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<sup>102</sup> Houser S, (1991),*ibid*.

<sup>103</sup> Houser S, (1991),*ibid*.

improvement in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across all courses by 1995, in particular law, business and administration, medicine and health.<sup>104</sup>

In this context "Higher education institutions are required to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategies to encourage greater participation and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and to have appropriate and effective consultative mechanisms in place".<sup>105</sup>

The emphasis in this orientation is a far cry from what we have been examining in the models and approaches that seek to operate outside of hegemonically constructed parameters. Before we explore the concerns of indigenous Australians in relation to this matter we want to draw attention to further concerns and initiatives of First Nations/American Indian people in Canada and the United States that are transforming the higher education landscape in those countries.

Kirkness and Barnhardt express the view that "While universities generally have adopted the political rhetoric of 'equal educational opportunity for all', many of the institutional efforts to convert such rhetoric into reality for First Nations people continue to fall short of expectations".<sup>106</sup> In order to address this issue in a serious manner they pose three 'hard questions':

- Why do universities continue to perpetuate policies and practices that historically have produced abysmal results for First Nations students, when we have ample research and documentary evidence to indicate the availability of more appropriate and effective alternatives?
- Why are universities so impervious to the existence of de facto forms of institutionalized discrimination that they are unable to recognize the threat that some of their accustomed practices pose to their own existence?
- What are some of the obstacles that must be overcome if universities are to improve the levels of participation and completion of First Nations students?<sup>107</sup>

Universities, to which students 'go', generally expect conformity to the range of deeply embedded values, practices, policies, programs and standards, which are intended to serve the needs of society. To receive the benefits of this system, in terms of the knowledge and skills offered and the promise of better, higher paying jobs, students are required to adapt to the conventional institutional norms and

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<sup>104</sup>DEET, (1990), *A Fair Chance For All*, op cit.

<sup>105</sup>Tickner R, (1993), *Social Justice for Indigenous Australians 1993-1994*, AGPS, Canberra.

<sup>106</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), 'FIRST NATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION: The Four R's-Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility, in *Journal of American Indian Education*, Vol. 30, Number 3, May 1991, Arizona State University, Tempe.

<sup>107</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), ibid.

expectations. Those who do not or can not make this transition, and who do not demonstrate 'success' when compared to other students, are typically regarded as aberrant and efforts are usually intensified at socialising them into what the institution requires of them. Such 'performance' is characteristically defined by universities in terms of 'low achievement', 'high attrition', 'poor retention', 'weak persistence' and so on. In particular this has been the case for First Nations students.

The intensification of pressure on First Nations students has produced 'solutions' which are more often than not based on a 'blame the victim' perspective such as special counselling and advisory centres, bridging and developmental programs, tutorials and a range of additional student support services. As Kirkness and Barnhardt suggest "To the extent that students are willing and able to check their own cultural predispositions at the university's gate, these kinds of initiatives can and do assist them in making the transition to the culture of the institution, but such intensification efforts alone do not appear to produce the desired results of full and equal participation of First Nations people in higher education".<sup>108</sup>

Despite the range of well intentioned support services overall attrition and retention rates of First Nations students remain near the bottom of all university students in both Canada and the United States. The obvious point to be made here is that the universities are still not providing hospitable environments which attract and hold First Nations students in anything like a satisfactory way.

A study by Tierney in 1991, of the college experiences of American Indian students in the United States, revealed five implicit assumptions held by the universities:

- Post-secondary institutions are ritualized situations that symbolize movement from one stage of life to another.
- The movement from one stage of life to another necessitates leaving a previous state and moving into another.
- Success in post-secondary education demands that the individual becomes successfully integrated into the new society's mores.
- A post-secondary institution serves to synthesize, reproduce, and integrate its members towards similar goals.
- A post-secondary institution must develop effective and efficient policies to insure that the initiates will become academically and socially integrated.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>109</sup>Tierney WG, (1991), 'The College Experience of Native Americans: A Critical Analysis' quoted in Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

Contrary to these assumptions, students who were interviewed by Tierney did not have 'social integration' in mind, especially if it was at the expense of their own culture which they brought with them. Kirkness and Barnhardt make the point that "The university must be able to present itself in ways that have instrumental value to First Nations students; that is, the programs and services that are offered must connect with the students' own aspirations and cultural predispositions sufficiently to achieve a comfort level that will make the experience worth enduring" (our emphasis).<sup>110</sup>

If such environments cannot be created no amount of special programs and student support services will make any appreciable difference.

While improved job opportunities might be a significant motivating factor in university attendance, most First Nations students would see this in broader terms linked to collective/tribal considerations "such as exercising self-government, or bringing First Nations perspectives to bear in professional and policy-making arena's".<sup>111</sup>

Detailing this point they identify six reasons why a university education can be important for First Nations communities and students:

- . It can be seen as a means of realizing equality and sharing in the opportunities of the larger society in which we live.
- . It can be seen as a means for collective social and economic mobility.
- . It can be seen as a means of overcoming dependency and 'neo-colonialism'.
- . It can be seen as a means of engaging in research to advance the knowledge of First Nations.
- . It can be seen as a means of providing the expertise and leadership needed by First Nations communities.
- . It can be seen as a means to demystify mainstream culture and learn the politics and history of racial discrimination.<sup>112</sup>

Seen in this light, the institutional perspectives of attraction, retention and attrition leave a great deal to be desired. For Kirkness and Barnhardt, First Nations students are looking for 'respect', 'relevance', 'reciprocity' and 'responsibility' linked to a larger purpose than just obtaining a university degree in order to get a better job. They are "seeking an education that will also address their communal

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<sup>110</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>111</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>112</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

need for 'capacity-building' to advance themselves as a distinct and self-determining society, not just as individuals".<sup>113</sup>

To many First Nations students universities are impersonal, intimidating and hostile environments in which their cultural knowledge, traditions and core values are neither recognised nor respected. This 'reality set' or 'world view', which the institutions expect students to leave at the campus gates, contrasts with the 'modern consciousness' which is valued and reproduced through the academic and research disciplines.

Referring to the work of Ron and Suzy Scollon, Kirkness and Barnhardt mention four characteristics of native people living in isolated northern communities. They tend to favour a lifestyle that exhibits:

- . a high respect for individual self-reliance;
- . non-intervention in other people's affairs;
- . the integration of useful knowledge into a holistically consistent world view;
- . a disdain for complex organizational structures.<sup>114</sup>

These aspects of indigenous consciousness are capable of generating significant tension and conflict when they are confronted by "the componentiality, specialization, systematicity, bureaucracy and literate forms characteristic of Western institutions and modern consciousness. The holistic integration and internal consistency of the Native world view is not easily reconciled with the compartmentalized world of bureaucratic institutions".<sup>115</sup>

If this tension and conflict involving two competing knowledge and value systems is to be resolved, universities will need to find ways to reduce the cultural distance and role dichotomy between knowledge production and knowledge consumption in university settings. This will necessitate going beyond the production and dissemination of 'literate knowledge' to include legitimization of indigenous knowledge and skills and the creation of new ways of relating oral traditions to modes of discourse based on literacy. As Joann Archibald sees it "With the technological advances of video, television and film, our world has become a combined oral/literate/visual one. This combination has exciting possibilities for First Nations because it is nearing the traditional holistic approach to teaching and

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<sup>113</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>114</sup>Scollon R & Scollon S, (1981), 'Human Knowledge and the Institutions Knowledge : Communication Patterns and Retention in a Public University', quoted in Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>115</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

learning which is needed to heal our people who have been adversely affected by history".<sup>116</sup>

A comprehensive list of qualities or standards that are required in the move to construct an "Indian theory of education" has been developed by Eber Hampton, President of Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. These standards, which universities can use to examine their policies and practices in order to reconstruct and develop more relevant and responsive approaches, include:

- **Spirituality** - an appreciation for spiritual relationships;
- **Service** - the purpose of education is to contribute to the people;
- **Diversity** - Indian education must meet the standards of diverse tribes and communities;
- **Culture** - the importance of culturally determined ways of thinking, communicating and living;
- **Tradition** - continuity with tradition;
- **Respect** - the relationship between the individual and the group recognized as mutually empowering;
- **History** - appreciation of the facts of Indian history, including the loss of the continent and continuing racial and political oppression;
- **Relentlessness** - commitment to the struggle for good schools for Indian children;
- **Vitality** - recognition of the strength of Indian people and culture;
- **Conflict** - understanding the dynamics and consequences of oppression;
- **Place** - the importance of sense of place, land and territory;
- **Transformation** - commitment to personal and social change.<sup>117</sup>

The development of reciprocity and responsiveness in the relationship between students and staff in university settings is critical to the achievement of these

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<sup>116</sup>Archibald J, (1990), 'Coyote's Story About Orality and Literacy', quoted in Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>117</sup>Hampton E, (1988), 'Toward a Redefinition of American Indian/Alaska Native Education', quoted in Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

standards. Conventional institutional roles typically involve staff as the creators and dispensers of knowledge and expertise and students as passive recipients.

Kirkness and Barnhardt, describe how these conventional roles can be broken down and replaced by two-way teaching and learning processes "in which the give-and-take between faculty and students opens up new levels of understanding for everyone. Such reciprocity is achieved when the faculty member makes an effort to understand and build upon the cultural background of the students, and the students are able to gain access to the inner workings of the culture (and the institution) to which they are being introduced".<sup>118</sup>

Reciprocal relationships of this kind enable staff and students to create new forms of education, paradigms and explanatory frameworks. One of the most powerful ways this can be achieved is by staff and students being located for at least some of the time outside of the protective walls of the institution. Although some staff "who do venture out...hesitate to make themselves vulnerable to any challenging of the efficacy of their authority and beliefs, and find ways to protect themselves behind a veneer of academic aloofness and obfuscation...First Nations students and communities (consider) such a position is no longer acceptable".<sup>119</sup>

From a First Nations perspective participation in university courses is not a neutral activity. It is more than 'gaining an education'. It is the means to gaining access to power, authority and control over everyday affairs. To do this requires the development of strategies similar to what Henry Giroux has termed 'border pedagogy', in which students

"engage knowledge as a border-crosser, as a person moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power. These are not only physical borders, they are cultural borders historically constructed and socially organized within maps of rules and regulations that limit and enable particular identities, individual capacities, and social forms. In this case, students cross over into borders of meaning, maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations which organize them become destabilized and reshaped".<sup>120</sup>

The implications of this kind of critical analysis for the creation of institutional settings and arrangements as envisaged by leaders such as Hampton are very far reaching. Some of the practical changes implied by this radical reorientation include:

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<sup>118</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>119</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

<sup>120</sup>Giroux H, (1988), 'Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism', quoted in Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

celebration and affirmation of indigenous students lives throughout the culture of the institution;

not just having an indigenous studies centre or one or two courses devoted to indigenous peoples;

students being helped to critically examine how their lives are shaped and moulded by the forces of society;

changing the organization of student affairs, the manner in which knowledge is constructed and assessment and evaluation is conducted;

developing forms of analysis relating to how power operates in organizations and strategies that seek to transform those relations;

developing strategies and policies that are generated by a vision of working with Native Americans toward the participatory goal of empowerment and emancipation.<sup>121</sup>

Kirkness and Barnhardt note that it is in the tribal colleges that the exercise of leadership and responsibility have the best long term prospects of improving First Nations participation in higher education. It is in these institutions of their own making and under their own control where the most comprehensive definitions and processes of education linked to self-determination are being realized. In a 1989 report by the Carnegie Foundation the significance of their achievements was acknowledged

"At the heart of the tribal college movement is a commitment by Native Americans to reclaim their cultural heritage. The commitment to reaffirm traditions is a driving force fed by a spirit based on a shared history passed down through generations, and on common goals. Some tribes have lost much of their tradition, and feel, with a sense of urgency, that they must reclaim all they can from the past even as they confront problems of the present. The obstacles in this endeavour are enormous but, again, Indians are determined to reaffirm their heritage, and tribal colleges, through their curriculum and campus climate, are places of great promise".<sup>122</sup>

Empowerment, emancipation and self-determination are central principles in the redefinition of First Nations participation in higher education. What is being sought is not a lesser or even a more equal education but a better one. Such an education is concerned with respecting indigenous people for who they are, it is

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<sup>121</sup>Tierney WG, (1991), op cit.

<sup>122</sup>Boyer P, (1989), 'Tribal Colleges: Shaping the Future of Native America', quoted in Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), ibid.

relevant to their world view, it provides and promotes reciprocal relationships and assists them to exercise responsibility over their own lives and futures. This is entirely different to approaches which focus on 'retention' and 'attrition' "as an excuse to intensify efforts at cultural assimilation"<sup>123</sup> and which have more often than not resulted in further alienation.

## Getting it Right

As we have already indicated, and tried to demonstrate through critical analysis and international comparisons, indigenous higher education and adult education provisions must take into account more than simplistic notions of attraction, participation, attrition, retention and outcomes.

The issue of under-representation and access to higher education, which has generated considerable pressure for governments, and which has resulted in the development and implementation of special entry provisions, supportive study environments and culturally appropriate awards, answers only part of the concern and vision of indigenous Australians.

Despite the valuable work that has been carried out by Aboriginal higher education units within universities, independent providers such as Tranby College and the Institute for Aboriginal Development, specialist courses such as the Aboriginal Adult Education course at the University of Technology Sydney and the Bachelor of Health Science (Aboriginal Health and Community Development) University of Sydney, specialist institutions such as Batchelor College in the Northern Territory and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Network, there is mounting evidence and pressure for change which reflects the highest ideals, values, and aspirations of indigenous Australians.

Part of this pressure for change comes from a recognition that current institutional forms and processes are either constraining or negating indigenous power and control in relation to planning, decision-making and implementation of higher education programs.

The other pressure for change comes from an accelerating feeling of purpose and vision for the future based on the cultural imperative of survival, the assertion of prior rights and the emergence of strong and vibrant forms of cultural expression, particularly in the fields of art and music.

In order to demonstrate this pressure for change we want to draw attention to a range of concerns, ideas and aspirations that have been expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living and working in different social and cultural contexts.

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<sup>123</sup>Kirkness VJ, & Barnhardt R, (1991), *ibid*.

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann, a graduate of Batchelor College and Deakin University, and school principal at Nauiyu in the Northern Territory, puts it this way

"Education must take account of the authentic culture of the people being educated. Culture itself is a learned social process...If, then, authentic cultural growth is to occur so much depends on the adults. In the case of the Nauiyu people the Aboriginal culture must be recognised as it is today and this then becomes a beginning for authentic cultural growth...all this demands a particular and fundamental process of adult education... Education must shift towards the area of allowing adults to think through the confusion, the tragedies, the mistakes, the pressures, to reflect on the very qualities that make them who they are; in other words to begin to take control of the entire educational process".<sup>124</sup>

At the 1992 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference, which took as its theme 'Towards 2000 - Maintaining the Momentum', most of the papers grappled with the challenge of finding ways to give effect to the highest ideals, values and aspirations of indigenous Australians related to higher education.

Donna Moodie, a student at the University of Southern Queensland for five years and President of the Student Union for two years, expressed passionate concern for the plight of indigenous students attending mainstream universities. In the case of her own institution, despite the support provided by seven staff for one hundred and fifty students at the Kumbari Ngurpai Lag Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, those students "clearly have problems".<sup>125</sup>

She says of this situation

"We are affected by systems...we need...recognition...of our academic achievements...I'm calling, and I think it is a legitimate call, to acknowledge Aborigines in academia...(An) embarrassing situation at the USQ is that we have realised how much we don't know. Our elders are so important to us that we must access them now, Their knowledge will be legitimised by us. We want Aboriginal studies. At the moment we don't have a choice. We look forward to accessing our culture in a formal way through tertiary institutions TAFE's and universities. USQ students are looking forward to the day when Aboriginal culture is not just summarily looked at , for

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<sup>124</sup>Ungunmerr Baumann MR, (1990), op cit.

<sup>125</sup>Moodie D, (1992), 'Issues of Concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students', paper presented at the 1992 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference, 'Towards 2000 - Maintaining the Momentum', Hervey Bay, Queensland, 6-11 December 1992.

example, one subject over a period of one hour on a subject called Australia, Asia and the Pacific. It is absolutely ridiculous, shameful".<sup>126</sup>

In an emotional presentation, Moodie provided one concern after another relating to the difficulties and problems faced by indigenous students in the mainstream university institutional setting. At one point she described how Kevin Carmody, the well known singer and a history student at her university, was subjected to a painful reminder of the power of hegemonic systems

"Kev Carmody...had to do...a history tutorial. He had to stand and talk for an hour and get marked for it. So what did he do? He took his guitar in and a tape recording of his mum and did an oral history presentation. Did he pass? No! It wasn't accepted. That completely denied all the oral history traditions that we know are so important to Aboriginal people".<sup>127</sup>

Her pressing call was therefore for this debilitating situation to be addressed as a matter of urgency and high priority

"We need quality in our courses...We want our voice to be heard...we really need the elders to give us a mandate, send us through university, and support us whilst there for we need your blessing to complete our goal. We cannot do it unless you support us. With our new found skills, our lives will be enhanced and not just our lives but black and white collectively. Please try to understand our move towards self-determination...I call on every one of you to assist us. Please."<sup>128</sup>

Helen Humes, from the Department of Aboriginal Programs at Edith Cowan University, was also very blunt about the problems faced by indigenous students

"...the requirements made of Aboriginal students in the academic sector are high; not only do they have to cope with the dilemma of leaving family and home (often coming from close knit family and community groups). The students need to adapt to an environment as well as experiences which are unlike their own, and one which requires them to learn and cope with a system which is alienated from the Aboriginal way of learning. Aboriginal students must contend with being a minority group, therefore entrance into a large academic institution has an incredible impact on the emotions of these students".<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Moodie D, (1992), *ibid.*

<sup>127</sup>Moodie D, (1992), *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup>Moodie D, (1992), *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup>Humes H, (1992), 'Student Issues', paper presented at the 1992 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference, 'Towards 2000 - Maintaining the Momentum', Hervey Bay, Queensland, 6-11 December 1992.

In response to concerns such as this, several papers were presented which explored alternative educational models and paradigms.

Daryl Kickett, for instance, from the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University of Technology, considered the development of the paradigm associated with 'Aboriginal Terms of Reference' (ATR). His paper starts from the viewpoint that "ignorance, racism, colonialism and ethnocentrism is alive and well in tertiary institutions. Anyone who disputes this obviously does not live in the real world".<sup>130</sup>

As an antidote to these barriers to indigenous advancement, Kickett believes that ATR provide a powerful instrument of empowerment. As he suggests

"Program and curriculum developers will not be able to deal effectively with Aboriginal realities if they do not incorporate processes which enable Aboriginal participants or students to come to terms with their own value system...In coming to terms with their own value systems individuals and groups require an opportunity to systematically explore options as they move through their tasks in decision-making or problem-solving. In so doing they will be able to place terms and conditions on transactions in order to retain that which is important in their own lives".<sup>131</sup>

Kickett sees ATR as the "engine room" for this process, "where important values-based decision-making occurs". Within this framework "students are given the opportunity to examine what is culturally appropriate for them, including appropriate ways of working in the local setting". And he adds that "The students must always consider Aboriginal ways of doing things, and the impact of their own culture on their individual ways of working".<sup>132</sup>

ATR are therefore concerned with cultural knowledge, understanding and experiences associated with a strong commitment to indigenous ways of thinking, working and reflecting. They incorporate "specific and implicit cultural values, beliefs and priorities from which Aboriginal standards are derived, validated and practiced".<sup>133</sup>

The central principles of ATR according to Kickett are:

- . Appreciation of Aboriginal diversity;
- . Reaffirmation of Aboriginal culture;

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<sup>130</sup>Kickett D, (1992), 'Aboriginal Terms of Reference: A Paradigm for the Future', paper presented at the 1992 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference, 'Towards 2000 - Maintaining the Momentum', Hervey Bay, Queensland, 6-11 December 1992.

<sup>131</sup>Kickett D, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>132</sup>Kickett D, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>133</sup>Kickett D, (1992), *ibid*.

- Confirmation of students' identity in the context of their own Aboriginal environment;
- Validation by the group, which is a necessary component for assessment of achieving a negotiated standard of competence;
- Recognition of historical, cultural, political and economic realities of that Aboriginal environment;
- Identification of Aboriginal issues coming out of or relating to that Aboriginal environment;
- Developing individual and collective options for the future<sup>134</sup>

For Kickett, this process-oriented way of working and learning assists students and their communities to:

- Build a picture of their internal environment and the external forces which impact on that environment;
- Identify and analyse the issues from this picture and assess the resources available both internally and externally in order to deal with issues;
- Plan, through the development of an ability to assess information provided from the process and to use it to develop short and long term goals;
- Implement plans by identifying the most relevant approaches which fit the culture;
- Evaluate the outcomes in order to determine the gaps and barriers;
- Redefine the plan to incorporate appropriate changes;
- Recycle through these processes as the need emerges.<sup>135</sup>

The development of courses and institutional processes based on the ATR paradigm is necessary for several reasons:

- It is a process of learning and working that ensures that it reflects the reality of the different indigenous groups;

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<sup>134</sup>Kickett D, (1992), *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup>Kickett D, (1992), *ibid.*

It is an effective way to transfer skills and knowledge in line with the goals of self-determination and self-management;

It is supportive of competency-based and adult learning principles, such as self-directed and self-paced learning and the recognition of prior learning;

It is an important strategy to facilitate and support higher retention rates;

It incorporates community development principles and facilitates empowerment through the exploration of choices based on group and cultural values and beliefs;

It is a process that allows individuals to assess and develop solutions to a variety of situations related to community needs;

It promotes the construction of indigenous teaching-learning contexts.<sup>136</sup>

These principles are now being promoted and enacted at Curtin University of Technology through processes that will increasingly allow for Aboriginal driven policy and programs.

Two of Kickett's colleagues, Glenis Grogan and Darlene Oxenham, provided in their paper a case study of what has been developed in the Aboriginal Health and Aboriginal Community Management and Development courses at Curtin University of Technology. Their approach, which they claim is innovative and revolutionary, "allows students to use their own work and community activities as the focus of learning and provides the setting in which they demonstrate competence".<sup>137</sup> The essential principles of this approach are in fact derived from the pioneering community-based education models developed by Batchelor College in the Northern Territory.<sup>138</sup>

Grogan and Oxenham say of this approach that "Students are required to focus on particular task oriented skills and performances using the necessary knowledge and understanding to demonstrate the required competence. The immediate

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<sup>136</sup>Kickett D, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>137</sup>Grogan G, & Oxenham D, (1992), 'A Case Study in Curriculum Development: Quiet Revolutionary Approaches', paper presented at the 1992 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference, 'Towards 2000 - Maintaining the Momentum', Hervey Bay, Queensland, 6-11 December 1992.

<sup>138</sup>See for example Kemmis S, (1988), *A Study of The Batchelor College Remote Area Teacher Education Program 1976-1988: Final Report*, Deakin Institute for Studies in Education, Geelong; Stewart I, (1989), *Community Based Teacher Education: The Logic of Restructuring the Batchelor College Teacher Education Program*, Batchelor College, Batchelor; Stewart I, (1989), *Reconstructing the Curriculum Framework for the Batchelor College Teacher Education Program*, Batchelor College, Batchelor; and, School of Education Studies, (1991), *Reaccreditation Document for the Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) and Diploma of Teaching*, Batchelor College, Batchelor.

advantage of this type of learning is that it is relevant to the student and has immediate application by them".<sup>139</sup>

This occurs within a teaching-learning context which supports concerns expressed by Aboriginal people during extensive processes of consultation. Issues raised by Aboriginal people emphasised that:

- . We want to run things ourselves!
- . We have to keep our culture strong, to work together!
- . We need to stop white people from taking over our things!
- . We want to do things Aboriginal way!
- . Needs of Aboriginal people can only be met by Aboriginal people working within the community under Aboriginal management!
- . Work is part of living and being an Aboriginal person within Aboriginal community and culture!
- . The work has to be managed in culturally appropriate ways, through Aboriginal ways of planning, organising, co-ordinating and controlling!<sup>140</sup>

The issue of access, in their view and in the view of institutions such as Batchelor College, is much more complex than is generally understood in the higher education sector. "If Aboriginal people access higher education by being resident in Perth", they say, "the risk to Aboriginal communities is that their members either do not return or they return with education which is inappropriate to cultural ways of working and living".<sup>141</sup>

In the two courses which are described the philosophical bases incorporate:

- . Empowerment through the acquisition of skills and knowledge;
- . Recognition of the validity of Aboriginal culture and societal structure;
- . A reaffirmation of Aboriginal identity; and,
- . Processes for self-determination and self-management.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>Grogan G, & Oxenham D, (1992), op cit.

<sup>140</sup>Grogan G, & Oxenham D, (1992), op cit.

<sup>141</sup>Grogan G, & Oxenham D, (1992), op cit.

<sup>142</sup>Grogan G, & Oxenham D, (1992), op cit.

Despite their obvious appeal and sophistication, these courses have attracted some criticism and scepticism, which is generated by ignorance of the validity of this kind of curriculum design and the entrenched elitism and conservatism of the academic gatekeepers who largely hold to a positivistic and materialistic world view. From this 'exalted' position they vigorously defend the traditions and standards of the academy from the incursions of 'Mickey Mouse' and 'Sub-standard' learning programs. However, for Grogan and Oxenham as well as others who have defended similar developments, the critical issue remains the fact that "these programs have been developed through discussion with students in such a way as to incorporate and give validity to Aboriginal culture which meets the needs and expectations of the communities where they live".<sup>143</sup> They also contend that "this approach to education will not only contribute to social change directed by empowered Aboriginal people, but will also contribute to the body of academic knowledge within our own cultural terms".<sup>144</sup>

Pearl Duncan, from Queensland University of Technology, put it to the conference that "First there were enclaves of support systems, now we have more sophisticated centres - there is great diversity throughout Australia".<sup>145</sup> She then poses the question "Is it now time for an indigenous university?".<sup>146</sup>

In response to this question she makes the following points, which we believe would be generally supported by most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in the higher education system :

Although the form is not clear, the consensus is that it is inevitable that there will be an independent indigenous university in Australia;

This requires the capturing of the political agenda and the assertion and demonstration of indigenous desires for quality higher education from quality higher education institutions;

The biggest battle will be to convince white academics and administrators that indigenous people are serious about this issue;

The majority of current university models are alien to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As Duncan emphasises with force, there is "...no recognisable onus to provide culturally relevant courses/learning environments - generally only the dominant culture counts, our culture despite its 'worthwhileness' is not appreciated - white rules take over and

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<sup>143</sup>Grogan G, & Oxenham D, (1992), op cit.

<sup>144</sup>Grogan G, & Oxenham D, (1992), op cit.

<sup>145</sup>Duncan P, (1992), 'An Indigernous University - A Chimera or a Realistic Option', paper presented at the 1992 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference, 'Towards 2000 - Maintaining the Momentum', Hervey Bay, Queensland, 6-11 December 1992.

<sup>146</sup>Duncan P, (1992), ibid.

apply. There is very little difference in white academics' perceptions of assimilation and self-determination";

An important aim should be to produce academics who can work in both worlds without losing their culture;

The preservation of links with the indigenous communities is vital;

A central indigenous university campus may not be necessary at first. Rather it is important to tighten the network right across Australia;

There must be credibility and accountability, whatever form an indigenous university takes. The myth of 'Mickey Mouse' courses and institutional arrangements, and the view that "we lack academic rigour and excellence" must be destroyed;

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics have the moral and intellectual capacity to achieve independence and strong leadership;

It is appropriate that the first independent indigenous university should be named Mabo University "because just as the actions of Eddie Mabo and his small band of persistent colleagues were prepared to risk all to defeat the pernicious doctrine of Terra Nullius as applied to land ownership, so we must take hold of the same spirit to defeat the insidious acculturation they would subject us to. In the name of academic freedom they give us cultural slavery".<sup>147</sup>

The theme of 'Aboriginal Self-Determination and the Australian Higher Education System' was also explored by Bob Morgan, from the Jumbunna Aboriginal Education Centre at the University of Technology, Sydney. Morgan's paper, which is dedicated to "all those who have dared to struggle for the right of Aboriginal people's to access education within the context of social, cultural and spiritual survival"<sup>148</sup>, is based on considerable experience in the NSW and National forums for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and higher education. In particular it was stimulated by a professional experience program visit to indigenous higher education institutions in Canada and the United States in 1992.

Morgan argues for a "redefinition of Aboriginal education", in the process of which "we must strive for a system which embraces the cultural distinctiveness of who we are as a people, identifies the essential cultural imperatives in terms of

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<sup>147</sup>Duncan P, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>148</sup>Morgan R, (1992), 'Aboriginal self-Determination and the Australian Higher Education System', paper presented at the 1992 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference, 'Towards 2000 - Maintaining the Momentum', Hervey Bay, Queensland, 6-11 December 1992.

curricula and educational philosophy and develop academic standards within which this can be achieved".<sup>149</sup>

Acknowledging the achievements of academic and student support programs and the more recent higher education units and centres, Morgan identifies a number of issues, concerns and obstacles which need to be addressed in order to "chart a new course for progress":

- Indigenous students and staff continually have to justify their existence within universities;
- Indigenous people's involvement with non-Aboriginal society predisposes them to "adopting some of the socio-political baggage of the majority culture";
- Claims of losing touch with the Aboriginal community are sometimes levelled at indigenous people who have 'achieved' or are seen as 'different', which is a genuine source of concern;
- Indigenous people's energies and intellect ought to be focussed on the system, which has contributed to a loss of cultural perspective amongst some indigenous people;
- The whole issue of identity is fraught with problems and is critical to the place in which indigenous peoples see themselves, historically, currently and in the future;
- Following the successful struggles to liberate access and participation opportunities, it is now time to redefine the vision and purpose of indigenous higher education. As Morgan contends "we must incorporate principles, policies and systems which will help us achieve a real sense of control and self-government over our higher education needs and futures. Education principles, policies and systems which allows us the time and pleasure to enjoy the rights and entitlements we have achieved, rather than having to continuously defend them";
- The challenge now is to ensure that higher education systems reflect and accommodate indigenous social, cultural and intellectual values "We must move beyond the prevailing situation where we are merely guests (at times unwelcomed) in someone else's education domain";
- There is no one perfect model that should be developed. There are, however, important developments occurring elsewhere, such as at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Canada and the Tribal Colleges

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<sup>149</sup>Morgan R, (1992), *ibid.*

in the United States, that have significant contributions to make to the future of indigenous higher education in Australia.<sup>150</sup>

In his concluding remarks, Morgan reveals the depth of frustration, concern and guarded optimism characteristic of all those who have like him been involved in this cultural and educational liberation struggle

"Aboriginal peoples have won the right of access to higher education only after devoting many years to breaking through entrenched barriers of opposition, barriers which are invariably based on non-Aboriginal society's sense of gratuitous superiority. Very few, if any, institution by its own volition and commitment to Aboriginal equity, have initiated and funded their own programs of affirmative action for Aboriginal students".<sup>151</sup>

The challenge then for Morgan is to gain control of the forces of change and to determine what direction and at what speed change should occur.

### Conclusions: Indigenous Control of Indigenous Higher Education

In this paper we have tried to show how deceptive claims about improvement and progress can be, especially when they are made by governments and their bureaucracies in relation to indigenous affairs.

In the case of indigenous higher education, despite the obvious improvements that have attended the development of special entry provisions, supportive study environments and culturally appropriate awards during the last twenty years, there is still a very wide gap between what is being achieved and what is being aspired for by indigenous staff, students and communities.

Part of the uneasiness felt by indigenous people involved in higher education is related to the problem of having to continually prove themselves to patronising, antagonistic or unsupportive colleagues, administrations and government bureaucracies.

Critical theories contribute to this feeling of uneasiness by revealing some of the insidious and embedded features of hegemonic systems which continually serve to constrain the struggles of indigenous people.

One aspect of this hegemonic imposition that concerns us is the continual distortion, incorporation and co-option of the language of indigenous struggle into the manifestos and policies of governments and their bureaucracies. We are thinking particularly of the notions of empowerment and self-determination that

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<sup>150</sup>Morgan R, (1992), *ibid*.

<sup>151</sup>Morgan R, (1992), *ibid*.

have been cynically used and abused in order to defuse and manipulate the cultural energy associated with those terms.

The question 'education for what?' needs to be carefully thought through and revisited regularly by all indigenous people in this country. The narrow, simplistic arguments related to equity in access, participation and outcomes and improved employment prospects simply do not go any way towards resolving the enormous dilemma of continuing cultural assimilation and genocide. The heritage and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are being carved up into those things that can be sold or used for commercial and financial profit and those things that are disposable or are standing in the way of 'progress' and 'development'. Government training schemes and development programs are also accelerating the processes of change and are frequently imposing quite inappropriate demands on communities. The Elders, as custodians of the law and culture, are more often than not sidestepped and left out of these processes or are deemed irrelevant to the efficiency and effectiveness of their logic. And so they are, unless it serves the interests of the managers, liaison officers, community development officers or project officers to have an 'exotic' or 'authentic' accompaniment to a launch, opening or special event.

This dilemma requires urgent attention and radical solutions. The alternative, independent higher education models we have examined in South Africa, Palestine, New Zealand, Canada and the United States demonstrate that cultural survival, empowerment and self-determination, as they relate to higher education, can be facilitated and actively promoted when indigenous people exercise genuine power and control in relation to their own affairs.

There is now a rapidly accelerating engagement by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the debate about how similar models might be used to transform indigenous higher education in this country.

Before outlining what we see as the distinguishing features of the emerging paradigm in indigenous higher education in Australia we want to emphasise that for some people aspects of the existing systems and arrangements are quite acceptable and have served them well. We are therefore not arguing against the ability of people to continue to have options and to be able to exercise choice within a framework of appropriate support.

We do believe, however, that the majority of indigenous people would wish to see, as soon as possible, a distinctively indigenous higher education institutional form which could translate the concerns and aspirations, and the highest ideals and values, into reality. Such an institutional form would as we see it provide a vibrant and dynamic, as well as respectful and dignified, forum for the important work of cultural maintenance, academic enquiry, vocational training, research and development and the exploration of new ways of responding to the challenge of living as an indigenous culture in an increasingly interdependent world.

From what we have examined in this paper it can be seen that the emerging paradigm in indigenous higher education has a number of critical features and imperatives:

- Indigenous higher education institutional forms and processes must be controlled and directed by indigenous people. This is absolutely essential if the principles of empowerment, self-determination, and self-management are to be given real meaning and force;
- Strong and direct links between indigenous higher education and indigenous communities are vitally important. Community participation, collaboration and direction will ensure that indigenous higher education maintains a responsive, respectful and reflexive orientation;
- The role of Elders and senior people as custodians of the law and culture is paramount and must have a central place in the emerging paradigm;
- Institutional arrangements and relationships need to reflect and respect culturally appropriate protocols and procedures;
- The next stage in the development of the paradigm will almost certainly involve a strengthening of the relationships between indigenous higher education units, centres and institutions. Out of this process an autonomous indigenous institutional form will probably emerge;
- The question of 'education for what?' must be faced squarely and carefully worked through in order to address the enormous dilemma of continuing cultural assimilation and genocide;
- A distinctively indigenous higher education institutional form will be concerned with translating the concerns and aspirations and the highest ideals and values of indigenous people into reality. In doing this it will provide the framework within which vibrant and dynamic, respectful and dignified work will be carried out in support of cultural maintenance, academic inquiry, vocational training, research and development and the exploration of new ways of responding to the challenge of living as an indigenous culture in an increasingly interdependent world;
- The qualities or standards that will characterise the emerging paradigm and autonomous institutional form include: respect for and development of a spiritual relationship between people and with the earth; a valuing of the notion of service to the community and to society; recognition of the diverse values, traditions and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities; efforts to ensure that culturally appropriate ways of thinking, communicating, living, and working are sustained; and the emergence of genuinely empowered indigenous people.



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